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ELEVEN SERMONS

Preached upon

Several Occasions.

AND A

PARAPHRASE, and NOTES

Upon the

First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth,
Seventh and Eighth Chapters of St. JOHN.

WITH A

Discourse of Church-Unity.

AND

Directions, how in this Divided State of *Christendom*, to keep within the *Unity of the Church.*

By *WILLIAM CLAGETT*, D.D.
Late Preacher to the Honourable Society of *Grays-Inn.*

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The

The PREFACE.

IF it may recommend a Book, to declare the Author of the Diſcourſes it contains, the Reader may be aſſured that this is another Volume of Dr. *Clagett*'s Works, never extant before.

Some of the following Diſcourſes he Preached at Court, and at Aſſize-times, and upon ſuch like Publick Occaſions, which therefore coſt him ſome pains more than ordinary in the Preparation, as likewiſe did other Sermons in this Collection, particularly that about the *Nature of Faith*. His ſudden Thoughts upon a Subject were ſo marvellous good, that they ſeemed to flow from a Fountain of Reaſon, and diſcovered a great Readineſs of Judgment in him; but they were very clear and full Diſcourſes, which he took any Time, and a particular Care to compoſe.

The Occaſion of his Writing the Paraphraſe, publiſhed in this Volume, was this: It was intended (as I have been informed) that a Commentary upon the whole Bible ſhould be ſet forth by Divines of our Church: For ſuch a Work being too big for one or two, was to be divided amongſt a ſufficient Select Number, every one of them taking his Part to expound; and Dr. *Clagett* made choice of the Goſpel of St. *John*. This was a brave and noble Deſign, which I hope is not quite laid aſide: For ſeeing in our Age God hath raiſed up ſuch Excellent Men in this Church, as the Chriſtian World hath ſcarce any where elſe, ſo very Eminent, and ſo Celebrated for their Admirable Compoſures, their Writings, and Sermons, it is great pity methinks that a Church of *England*-Expoſition of Scripture ſhould be wanting all the while, foraſmuch as this would be altogether as beneficial to the World as any of the great Things our Worthies have done.

And

And were there ever abler Men, and fitter for the Work of Interpreting Scripture, ſince the time of that Inſpiration by which the *Scripture was given?* In the late Reign thoſe Texts of Scripture were examined which the *Romaniſts* quote for their Cauſe, and the ſhewing clearly, that Popery hath no Foundation in Scripture, did very good Service to the Truth. But were a general Expoſition of all the Sacred Books of Scripture put forth into the World by the ſame Men, this would reſcue perverted and abuſed Texts out of the hands of all Sectaries and Hereticks whatſoever. I need not ſhew at large how vaſt would be the Advantage of ſuch a Work to the Church of God, both now, and in Ages to come. Dr. *Clagett*, who exceedingly approved the Deſign, was very forward to prepare his Part in the Work; he publiſhed his Paraphraſe upon the Sixth Chapter firſt by it ſelf, becauſe he ſaw that was needful to be done at a time, when the Papiſts to make Pro-

ſelytes boaſted much of ſome Paſſages in that Chapter, as undeniably proving *Tranſubſtantiation*; but his intent was to go through all the reſt of the Chapters of St. *John*; and he had finiſhed his Expoſition, if it had pleaſed God to continue his Life.

Here is alſo added a ſmall Tract concerning *Church-Unity*; ſhewing how we are to maintain the *Unity of the Spirit* in the midſt of Diviſions. A Diſcourſe that was very ſeaſonable then when it was written, and is ſo ſtill.

Theſe ſeveral Diſcourſes of the Excellent Author I have ſent into the World, not doubting but they will be found to be of that Uſe and Benefit to all that read them, which was my end in the Publication of them.

N. C.
ſorti Nicolas Claget
Minister of Bury.
q^e Author's Brother.

THE

The First Sermon.

Rom. I. 17.

For therein is the righteouſneſs of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The juſt ſhall live by faith.

THESE words are a reaſon given of what the Apoſtle ſaid in the former Verſe; *I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt; for therein is the righteouſneſs of God revealed*, &c. *i. e.* Becauſe God hath revealed in the Goſpel what that Righteouſneſs is which he will accept from us in order to our Salvation. *The righteouſneſs of God* ſignifies that Righteouſneſs which God requires, and which he will accept from man. And what this Righteouſneſs is, is revealed in the Goſpel; that is, the Goſpel plainly repreſents to us, what manner of perſons we muſt be in order to our Juſtification. Now there are two things

things which he lays down in the remaining part of the Text.

1. That this Righteouſneſs proceeds from Faith: *The righteouſneſs of God from faith to faith.*

2. That this principle of Righteouſneſs was mentioned in the *Old Teſtament*; *As it is written, the juſt ſhall live by faith.*

And therefore we are firſt to enquire,

1. What is the meaning of that Paſſage, *from faith to faith*? In what ſenſe is the Righteouſneſs which God requires ſaid to be *from faith to faith*? I anſwer, that the meaning is this, The Righteouſneſs which pleaſeth God, is that which muſt begin from Faith, which muſt ſtill proceed from Faith, and which at laſt muſt end in Faith: For this is a ſaying like to that in *Rom.* 6. 19. *As ye have yielded your members ſervants to uncleanneſs, and to iniquity unto iniquity, even ſo yield your members ſervants to righteouſneſs unto holineſs*; For by ſerving *iniquity unto iniquity*, is meant adding one ſin to another, and daily growing worſe: And by ſerving *righteouſneſs unto holineſs*, is meant, adding one degree of goodneſs to another, and growing better. And thus here the Righteouſneſs which is *from faith to faith*, is a Righteouſneſs which firſt proceeds from Faith, and is always built upon it afterwards, and

is

is at laſt perfected by it. For that which the Apoſtle intimates by theſe words, is, That the Righteouſneſs of a good Chriſtian, having Faith for the ground and reaſon of it, does encreaſe as his Faith encreaſes; and that the more he is *rooted and ſtrengthned* in Faith, the better he grows, and he pleaſes God the more. This ſeems to be the moſt natural interpretation of theſe words, *viz.* That Faith is all along the Principle and Ground of that Righteouſneſs which God expects, and is pleaſed with. But then,

2. What relation hath that Paſſage out of the *Old Teſtament* to this matter, *As it is written, the juſt ſhall live by faith?* I anſwer, That the Apoſtle does hereby deſign to ſhew that though the Promiſes of the Goſpel are incomparably more excellent than thoſe that were made under the Law, yet it was the belief of God's Promiſes then, that held good men to the performance of their duty, and intituled them to the favour of God: The words are taken out of *Habakk.* 2. 4. God had promiſed the *Jews*, that they ſhould return from their Captivity in his appointed time, *v.* 3. therefore, ſays he, *though the viſion tarry, wait for it, becauſe it will ſurely come; but the juſt ſhall live by his faith*, that is to ſay, The ſure belief of this Promiſe would ſupport good men in the ſervice of God, under the Captivity in an Idolatrous Land, and their Faith ſhould be rewarded with

with a return into their own Country in God's appointed time. In like manner Christians, who have better promises, *viz.* of an Heavenly Countrey, do in this Faith work that Righteousness which the Gospel requires; and for thus living by Faith in this World, they shall live for ever in their Heavenly Countrey. Faith was the foundation of the *Jews* observing their Law of outward Works, and it was rewarded with such Blessings as that Law promised: But the Gospel of Christ, as we read in the foregoing Verse, is *the power of God unto salvation*; and therefore it is still true, but in a much higher sense, that *the just shall live by faith*, because the Gospel requires an inward and spiritual Righteousness, to which we are brought by the belief of promises of spiritual and eternal good things, and because such Faith shall bring us to everlasting life. Thus much for the Explication of the Text.

And now my work shall be to enquire upon what ground it is, that the Scriptures do attribute so much to *Faith* as they do; and to shew, that this is done without any disparagement at all to Godliness and Virtue. And I have chosen this Argument to discourse upon, that it may appear how unreasonably we of the Reformation are charged by our Adversaries, as we often have been, with *Solifidianism*, as they call it; that is, with

with attributing all to Faith, and leaving no neceſſity for Righteouſneſs and good Works. We do indeed with the Scriptures ſay, That *we are juſtified by faith*, and that *the juſt do live by Faith*; but we do with the Scriptures alſo affirm Faith to be the principle of obedience; and there is a *righteouſneſs from faith to faith*, without which we cannot pleaſe God, nor be juſtified before him: We do alſo renounce the merit of good Works, and reſolve the acceptance of them into the Grace and Mercy of God in not imputing our ſins to us; and when we have done all, they are the gracious Promiſes of God, and it is not the dignity of our own Righteouſneſs that we rely upon; but then we ſay, it is the faith of theſe Promiſes that maketh us *live to God* by Repentance and good Works, which are ſo neceſſary, that we are *dead* without them. Now from hence indeed it follows, That where there is that faith which God requires, holineſs will follow: For if we are *juſtified by faith*, if *he that believes ſhall be ſaved*, *and* yet *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, then they that believe, are holy; which if it be found true, then we, not to ſay the Scriptures, are juſtified in attributing ſo much to Faith as we do; that it is by Faith we pleaſe God, that we live by Faith, and that we are ſaved by Faith. On the other hand it ſeems hard to underſtand, how thoſe great

great things ſhould be ſpoken of Faith, when there are many that do not *hold faith and a good conſcience*, but *hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs*: And ſince it follows more certainly, That a man believes becauſe he is holy, than that he is holy becauſe he believes, it ſhould rather have been ſaid, that a Believer ſhall live by his Righteouſneſs, than that *the juſt ſhall live by faith*; and yet following the Scriptures we ſay, that we *live by faith*, and are *juſtified by faith*. To clear this difficulty, it will be requiſite to conſider well theſe two things.

1. What the Nature of Faith is? And

2. What power it has, or what efficacy muſt neceſſarily be granted to it, and when it hath that power and efficacy?

I ſhall not only aim at making the notions of theſe things clear, but alſo profitable unto Godlineſs.

1*ſt* then, As to the Nature of Faith; I do not ſee that the Scripture means any thing by *Faith*, but a perſuaſion of the truth of ſomething that is affirmed, upon the Teſtimony of one that affirms it, or upon ſome other reaſon beſides ſenſible evidence, or immediate knowledge. And thus Divine Faith is a perſuaſion of the truth of thoſe things, which we have God's teſtimony for: And that we are thus to underſtand theſe words, *Faith* or *believing* in the Scriptures, is very plain

plain, becauſe otherwiſe the Scriptures muſt have altered the common ſenſe and ſignification of words: But can we think, that when our Bleſſed Saviour required believing under the penalty of damnation, and that when the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts wrote the *New Teſtament*, in which they laid the ſame ſtreſs upon Faith, that Chriſt himſelf had done before them; that they, I ſay, ſhould mean ſomething elſe by the word, than what it ſignified according to common uſe, and yet that they ſhould not tell us ſo? The Writers and firſt Preachers of the Goſpel did indeed treat of new Subjects, *viz.* of thoſe new Revelations of God's Will, that had been lately made: but when they made uſe of words, that had a known meaning, they did not depart from the received ſignification of thoſe words: But by *Faith* or *believing*, men always underſtood, being perſuaded of the truth of ſome Propoſition. And thus Faith is deſcribed in the Scripture, where it is deſcribed moſt fully: In St. *John* 11. 25. ſays our Saviour, *He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live*; but this is explained, *v.* 27. *I believe that thou art Chriſt the Son of God, that ſhould come into the world.* And again, *John* 8. 24. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins.* Moreover, that Faith by which the Church ſhould ſtand, wanted nothing ſurely that belongs to the nature of Faith, and that is thus expreſ-

ſed;

ſed? *We believe and are ſure, that thou art Chriſt the Son of the living God*; and this becauſe *not fleſh and blood, but God had revealed it.* Thus *Abraham*'s Faith which was *imputed to him for righteouſneſs*, was his *accounting, that God was able to raiſe up Iſaac even from the dead.* And all the holy men mentioned in *Heb.* 11. are ſaid to have *died in faith*, being *perſuaded of the promiſes.*

As to thoſe that think there is more in the nature of Faith, than this comes to, they either return to this in other words, or add ſomething that doth not belong to the nature of it; thoſe that ſay, there muſt be a particular application of the Promiſes where there is true Faith, ſay well; but then application is nothing elſe but a perſuaſion of, or an aſſent unto a ſingle Propoſition: For inſtance, *I am perſuaded, that God ſent his Son into the world to ſave mankind*, is a general perſuaſion; *Chriſt came for my Salvation*, which is the Application, is a particular one; *Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, therefore without holineſs I ſhall not. This laſt is but perſuaſion, and there is that in the former, therefore Faith in both: Again, if *reſting and relying upon Chriſt* is ſaid to be Faith, the meaning muſt be, either that I am aſſured Chriſt will ſave me, and this is being perſuaded of the truth of that ſaying, or elſe that I rely upon his Perſon; but a Perſon cannot be believed otherwiſe, than

than by believing something of him, or something that he has said. Some there are that think the nature of Faith doth consist in a certain degree of Persuasion; and the *Romanists* tell us, there must be Infallibility in it: But now there is a *weak* as well as a *strong* Faith; and though a greater degree of Assent is more working and powerful, yet the nature of Faith is in the least. Lastly, some good men are apt to think, that the goodness of the Will and Affections, nay, and Holiness of Life, belongs to the nature of true Faith; but this cannot be, because although Faith, where it is in that degree that it ought to be, there, as I shall shew, it will produce holiness of Heart and Life; and therefore Faith is sometimes spoken of in the Scriptures as comprehending those good Affections, and those good Works, which it causes, yet sometimes they are distinguished from one another, and therefore they are not the same; so that when all is done, the whole nature of Christian Faith doth consist in this, That it is a persuasion of the Truth of those Doctrines which Christ hath made known to us. Now for the second Point.

2. Concerning the power and efficacy of Faith, we are to consider, that there are these two things attributed to it; our *Justification*, and our *Holiness* or *Obedience to the Gospel*. And here we will first consider.

1. What Efficacy Faith has as to the Juſtification of him that believes; and this I ſhall ſhew very briefly and plainly in theſe following particulars.

1. Faith may be ſaid to be juſtifying or ſaving, in that it puts a man into a good way of being juſtified; and thus *believing that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, may be ſaid to be juſtifying Faith, becauſe it is the firſt ſtep towards Juſtification; and believing his Precepts with his Promiſes and Threatnings, is in this ſenſe a more Juſtifying Faith, becauſe it brings a man nearer to that ſtate in which he ſhall be juſtified. But,

2. If we ſpeak of Actual Juſtification, and continuance in God's favour, then not any, nor all the proper acts of Faith taken together, but ſeparate from Repentance and Obedience, are ſufficient; for where God hath made more conditions than one neceſſary, there the performance of all but one, will not ſuffice; and therefore where forgiveneſs and ſalvation is promiſed to one ſingle condition, there the preſence of all the reſt is ſuppoſed; *He that giveth a cup of cold water to a diſciple in the name of a diſciple, ſhall not loſe his reward*; but ſhall *cold water*, waſh away the treachery of *Judas*, or the injuſtice of *Pilate*? *He that confeſſeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, hath eternal life*; but ſtill *to be carnally minded is death*; *He that believeth and is baptized*,

tized, ſhall be ſaved. Nevertheleſs it is true, that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven; and therefore where nothing leſs than Salvation is promiſed to Believing and Baptiſm, all that which in reaſon ſhould follow, is meant, though it be not expreſſed.

3. If we ſpeak of final and irreverſible Juſtification, this is neither to be obtained by Faith nor Obedience, without perſeverance in both. God doth in this Life juſtify true Believers, but not once for all, till they have *fought* their *good fight*, and *finiſhed* their *courſe*. As the Lord in the Parable forgave his Servant, and yet called him to account for his Debt, when he proved cruel to his Fellow; for this ſhewed that his pardon was but conditional; *So likewiſe*, ſays our Saviour, *ſhall your heavenly Father do unto you.*

Now I confeſs, what hath been ſaid in anſwer to the firſt and ſecond Inquiries, gives no ſufficient account why we are ſaid to be juſtified by Faith ſo frequently in the Scripture, but rather ſeems to make it more unaccountable: For if there be no more in the nature of Faith than aſſent to Truth, this ſeems to be a very common attainment, not deſerving thoſe great things that are ſpoken of Faith in the Scripture: Can that be the Faith, by which all good men have *wrought righteouſneſs*, which hath been *held in un-*

righteouſneſs by as many wicked? And then as to the power of this Faith in order to Juſtification, Can that be the *faith of God's elect*, which the Reprobates have as well as they? Do *the juſt live by* that *Faith* with which others periſh? How is that Faith *imputed to them for righteouſneſs*, which does but aggravate the condemnation of theſe? Nay, how is that juſtifying and ſaving Faith, which the Devils have as well as we; for they aſſent, and therefore believe, and *tremble* becauſe they believe?

Let us therefore proceed to the ſecond Conſideration concerning the power and efficacy of Faith; *viz.* To make men attain to that righteouſneſs which God requires and accepts. Now if upon a juſt examination of this matter it will appear, that Faith, if it be in men, as it ought to be in them, will make them obedient and holy, and therefore that the wicked want Faith that is properly ſo called, and have not that Faith which God in the Scripture requires, then there will be no difficulty in conceiving why the Scripture ſo often and ſo remarkably ſays, that *we are juſtified by faith*. Here therefore I ſhall repreſent what thoſe things are in which the force of Faith lies, to govern our Hearts and Lives; and then I may leave you to judge, whether it would not produce the effect of holineſs, when they are all together; and conſequently, that there

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is a defect of Faith in all ungodly men. Now,

2. The power and efficacy of Faith to make us holy, lies in these three things.

1. In the nature of the things themselves that are believed.

2. In the manner of believing them.

3. In the permanency of the belief it self, or rather in the dwelling of our mind upon it.

I shall begin with considering what influence it hath by virtue of the things believed.

1. The Truths we believe, do represent good and evil to us; they are not Points of Doctrine, which we are never the better nor the worse, whether they be true or not; but they are of very near concernment to us, and are therefore fit to work upon our desires and affections.

2. What we believe, does represent to us our greatest good on the one hand, and what we have most reason to fear on the other: If a good thing that is offered us, may be disparaged by a greater good that stands in competition with it, it doth not much inflame or move the Affections: Now he that believeth aright, apprehends the Joys of another Life to be so great, that there is nothing in this to rival them; this is that which made the Patriarchs to count themselves *Pilgrims and Strangers upon earth; they desired a better* (i. e.) *a heavenly countrey.*

3. We are perſuaded that this Inheritance belongeth to us upon our care and faithfulneſs in doing the will of our heavenly Father. If we had abſolute aſſurance of the heavenly Country, this Faith might well cauſe ſatisfaction in the benefit; but if we are to *abſtain from fleſhly luſts that war againſt the ſoul*; or we are ſure to be excluded, if we aſſent not only to the truth of the Promiſe, but to the condition of the Promiſe, then our Faith works by fear and hope, and puts us upon fulfilling the condition; but if men do not believe the condition, it will be an harder matter to perſuade them to obey, becauſe it will be ſo eaſy for them to perſuade themſelves that they need not.

4. We are alſo perſuaded, that the condition, *viz.* doing the will of our Heavenly Father, is through the grace of God poſſible; otherwiſe the belief of an Eternal Happineſs in the Life to come, would not ſtir us to labour for it: This is one reaſon why the *Devils tremble* only though they believe, becauſe they cannot aſſent to the Promiſes as made to Them, for they are not made to Them; and if we ſhould want the Faith of the poſſibility of Salvation, all the reſt of our Faith would make us miſerable and deſperate, but not active and careful to *work out our ſalvation.*

In ſhort, if we believe the truth wherein the greateſt good is promiſed, and that 'tis promiſed

promiſed upon condition of obedience; and that the condition is enforced by the threatning of the greateſt puniſhments, and that it may well be performed: then in this Faith there is nothing wanting as to the matter of it, to make us fruitful in holineſs & good works: But if we do not believe all this, but only ſome part of it, our unfruitfulneſs may well be imputed to want of Faith; but this I confeſs doth not go very far to ſatisfy the difficulty, becauſe many believe all needful truth, and yet remain unholy. Wherefore let us go to the ſecond Point. *Viz.*

2. The manner of believing Divine Truth; for there is very much of the power of Faith to ſanctify us in this very thing. Let us, for inſtance, take the firſt Article of the Creed, I *believe in God*, or I believe that God is. To believe this conſiderately, and diſtinctly, is to believe that there is an Infinite Being, an Omnipreſent Being: and that he is holy, juſt, and good: But now our believing that God is, hath no power to make us circumſpect in our actions, and careful of our thoughts, but by ſuch diſtinct perſuaſions and conſiderations as theſe, which are truly and properly Faith: Nor will theſe diſtinct conſiderations have much power neither, unleſs they be diſtinctly applied to our ſelves: God is infinite in all Perfections, and therefore I am to ſerve and worſhip him; he is Omnipreſent, and therefore he is with

me, and ſees me in all that I do, and knows every one of my ſecrets, and even every thought of my heart, and therefore how ſhall I dare ſo much as to *regard iniquity in my heart*? He is infinitely Wiſe and Good, and therefore in this or in any other matter it would be extreme folly as well as ſin to follow mine own will in oppoſition to his: Now all this is Faith, or believing true Doctrine; and it is by ſuch diſtinct apprehenſions and applications as theſe, that we muſt be enabled to overcome the World, and to purify our hearts: But if we believe in that manner, as to reſt in the general Doctrine, and to go no farther, I do not ſee how our Faith ſhould be operative much more than if we had none at all; and if the general belief of one Article is therefore fruitleſs, becauſe it is but general, and not reſolved into the awakening Conſiderations that are under it, nor applied diſtinctly to our ſelves under ſuch Conſiderations, then alſo will the believing of the whole Creed in this faſhion, without particular perſuaſions and applications, be fruitleſs alſo; and it may be ſaid of us, that we *underſtand neither what we ſay, nor whereof we affirm*; and then what we ſay and affirm, can have no great force upon us to make us ſubdue our Paſſions, and mend our Lives. But though this will go a great way to reſolve the unholineſs of men profeſſing the Faith, into want of Faith, yet I think it doth

doth not altogether satisfy, that where Faith is as it should be, there will be an holy mind, and a godly life; because there are many men of clear and active thoughts, and conversant in the study of Religion, that do not live by Faith; for as the Faith of such men cannot in reason be thought to be a confused and indeterminate persuasion; so it is too plain by experience, that some such do retain the Faith, but *make shipwrack of a good conscience.* And therefore let us consider the third thing wherein the power of Faith consists, *viz.*

3. The permanence of it upon the mind, or a constancy of frequent consideration upon what we believe: That is to say, let us suppose a man that doth not only believe all matters of Faith that are needful, and apprehend them distinctly and particularly, and with application to himself; but likewise by very much consideration of these things, hath made them present and habitual to himself; and of such a man I say, That he is under the whole power of Faith, and he it is that *overcomes the world*: For such a Believer has two advantages, which cannot fail to make him a good man.

1. His Persuasion or his Faith is present to his mind, when he most needs it; (*i.e.*) upon all occasions of temptation; so that he will be ready in the strength of it to say with *Joseph*, *How*

ſhall I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God? But now though one believes all the awakening Doctrines of Religion, yet if he does not think of them, nor lay them to heart, when the Devil, the World, and the Fleſh are buſy with him, tis all one with him at the time, as if he had never heard of the Articles of Chriſtian Faith; and for the preſent he is as much without the Operation of Faith, as if he had none at all: It is with him, as it is with a man in a ſwooning fit, there is indeed life in him, but it is without ſenſe and motion; and for the time he differs not from one that is dead; or rather, as there is a principle of ſenſe and motion in the one, without any act of either, ſo is there indeed in the other a Principle of Faith, but no Act of it, and it is therefore as if it were not at all. Diſtinct and particular application of what we believe, will do much towards the reſtraining of a man's luſts; and this is properly Faith; but then that Faith which once was, and now is not, can do nothing at preſent; which is the caſe of too many perſons profeſſing Chriſtianity, That their belief of Divine Truth is oftner abſent than preſent, becauſe they do not think of thoſe things which ſhould govern them, and aſſiſt them under Temptations, but by chance, or when they cannot help it; their buſineſs is to put thoſe things out of their minds, and not to fix them there. And this is the firſt advantage

tage of one that is conſtant in his conſideration of the Truths whereof he is convinced, that they are preſent to him when he ſtands in need of their help, and indeed never at any great diſtance from him. The

2*d*. Is this, and that is the greateſt of all, That he hath a true and lively ſenſe of theſe things, as often as they return to his mind; and he always believes them as he ſhould do, under a vigorous apprehenſion of his own great concernment in them. To believe that there is a God, and a Life to come; and that the Son of God came to be our Saviour, and will come to be our Judge; that through the Infinite Mercy of God, and through the Death and Paſſion of our Saviour, we may obtain Forgiveneſs of Sins, and Eternal Life; to believe theſe things, I ſay, according to their nature, and our concernment in them, is to have a due ſenſe of them, and to be juſtly affected with them more than with all other intereſts whatſoever, becauſe theſe indeed are the greateſt of all: Now it is by a Conſtancy of Believing, (*i. e.*) of Conſidering theſe things, and making them preſent to us, that we come to that Faith which conſiſts in a right apprehenſion, and a juſt ſenſe of them: Nor will any other means do without this; and indeed all means of Grace are ineffectual without it, and they are then effectual when they bring us to this degree of Faith: The Prayers that we make

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are unprofitable, if they do not help to fix our minds upon God and Divine Truth, and by their frequent returns make a ſenſe of Religion natural and familiar to us: Our reading the Scriptures, and hearing good Doctrine and Exhortation, and our aſſembling for the worſhip of God, is unprofitable to Godlineſs otherwiſe, than by accuſtoming of us to think as we ſhould do; that is, to be affected with the Doctrines of *our moſt holy Faith*: Good education and good examples do no otherwiſe promote the work of God in our minds, than by awakening our conſideration of that Truth, which is to *renew us in the ſpirit of our minds*: Afflictions and Judgments, the Fears and Apprehenſions of Death, the amazing Calls of God's Providence, cannot of themſelves work the reformation of an evil heart and life; if they do it, it is by beginning to bring men to that Conſideration which they continue afterwards, till they come to a Faith that anſwers the nature of the things they believe, which conſiſts in a juſt ſenſe and apprehenſion of them; but this is not to be gained, but by a conſtant Conſideration, becauſe they are ſpiritual things, or future things after this life, which are the main Objects of our Faith. If a ſick man believes that he ſhall gain his health by ſuch a method; or a poor man, that he ſhall get an eſtate; or a priſoner, that he ſhall recover his liberty; or

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any man, that he ſhall come to his end in this world by ſuch a courſe of means, there is no need of much Conſideration to perſuade himſelf to try it, becauſe without any pains taken with himſelf, he is naturally poſſeſt with a lively perſuaſion of his concernment in things of this nature: But in Religion it is otherwiſe; tho the intereſt be great, nay, the greateſt of all, yet it is not a ſenſible nor a preſent intereſt in compariſon, and ſo our Faith muſt be *renewed day by day*, that we may be affected with it, as reaſonable creatures ought to be; and by much thinking of it, (*i. e.*) by many Acts of Faith, arrive to ſuch a ſenſe of God, and our intereſt in Religion, as the nature of the thing deſerves. And this is that Faith which overcomes the world, which purifies the heart, and makes a man a new creature.

I deny not, That wicked men believe, and do contrary to a ſenſe of their duty, and of their obligations to God: I acknowledge, that they have ſo much Faith, as makes them uneaſie under their guilt, ſomewhat loth to commit ſin, and aſhamed and afraid when it is committed: I grant that they have Faith truly ſo called; but then they want Faith too, that Faith which is properly ſo called alſo, and which the Scripture requires: Either they want the Faith of aſſenting to ſome needful Truth, which perhaps doth not often happen; or they want the Faith of a diſtinct

ſtinct and particular perſuaſion and application to themſelves, which happens more often; or they want the Faith of frequent aſſenting, of a permanent perſuaſion fixt in their hearts by conſideration; which I doubt is the frequent defect: But now the Scripture doth not barely require, that we ſhould once for all perſuade our ſelves of the Truths of God's Word; but moreover, That the *word of God* ſhould *dwell richly in us*; and that we ſhould be *rooted and eſtabliſhed in Faith*; that *Chriſt ſhould dwell in our hearts by Faith* and the like; which is plainly to require a fixed and lively ſenſe of Divine Truths upon our ſouls, cauſed by much converſation with them, and thinking upon them: Now this I ſay, That every act of Meditation, or Thought upon theſe things, is a diſtinct Aſſent to them, and is therefore truly and properly Faith: Now becauſe we are to interpret Scripture by Scripture, therefore this Scripture, That *by Faith we are juſtified*, is to be interpreted by the aforeſaid Exhortations; and conſequently, by *Juſtifying Faith* we are to underſtand an habitual and permanent perſuaſion of the great Truths of Religion, effected by a frequent and juſt conſideration of them; and ſuch Faith will *juſtify*, becauſe it will *ſanctify*; it will procure the relative change of putting us into a ſtate of Favour with God, becauſe it will procure the real or perſonal change of ſubduing our

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corrupt affections, and making us obedient to God *from the heart*: For ſuppoſe a man by conſtant conſideration to have gained ſuch a ſenſe of Spiritual things, as by aſſiduity men come to have in all matters they frequently think of, and converſe about, how is it poſſible, but he muſt be a good man in the reſt of his life? But men are but half perſuaded, that never think of theſe things, but by chance, or when they cannot help it: So that this is the great point wherein we exerciſe liberty in matters of Religion; *viz.* Whether we will conſider or not; (*i. e.*) Whether we will often perſuade our ſelves of the great Truths of God, and a World to come; or but very rarely: This is the main hinge upon which our ſtate turns; and here lies the principal power we have, ſtill, under the Grace of God, to help and reform our ſelves; which ſeems to be ſuggeſted by the Scriptures inſiſting ſo much upon it, That we are *juſtified by Faith*; for this ſhews us where our ſtrength lies: Nay, *the juſt* himſelf *lives by his Faith*; and it is by Faith that he perſeveres in Righteouſneſs: And where ſuch Faith is, as I have now deſcribed, it will not fail to influence the mind and converſation: For we are led by perſuaſion to evil as well as to good; and when a man doth ill, it cannot be, that at the ſame time he ſhould be perſuaded to do well: No wonder therefore, that the Scripture concludes

cludes of all wicked men, That they are not perſuaded of the truth of thoſe things which they profeſs to believe: *They profeſs*, ſays, the Apoſtle, *to know God, but in works, they deny him*, Tit. 1. 16. But works neither deny nor affirm any thing, they only ſhew whether we our ſelves do one or the other. If then all that are *diſobedient*, are in a true ſenſe *unbelievers*; then all who *fully believe*, are *holy*. *By Faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Iſaac*; but if the command to offer up his Son, was the Trial of his Faith, then had he not obeyed, his belief had not been true: Therefore alſo where the belief is true, where it is a fixed and lively ſenſe of God and Religion, where it doth not come in as a ſojourner, but *dwelleth richly* in the Soul, it will ſanctify and cleanſe it.

In ſhort; This permanent perſuaſion of the Truths of the Goſpel, being that without which we cannot *bring forth fruit unto God* in all good works he hath required of us, and with which we ſhall, it muſt neceſſarily be the *faith by which the juſt do live*.

Finally therefore, my Brethren, *Be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil; ſtand, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breaſt plate of righteouſneſs, and your feet ſhod with the preparation of the goſpel*

gospel of peace. But *above all, take the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.* By all which it appears, That Christian Truth is our Armour against Sin; and therefore let that humble man's Prayer be ours, and our care answerable; *Lord we believe, help thou our unbelief.* And may the God of Truth *increase our faith* in us, that it may be *fruitful in good works*, to the glory of his Name, and our eternal Salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Second Sermon.

Heb. XI. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him: for he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.

THE words are the moſt comprehenſive that I can find in all the Bible, for bringing all that is neceſſary to be ſaid concerning the true nature, the full extent, and proper uſe of Faith under one Text; which poſſibly you will acknowledge, if you conſider with me the very deep, and yet clear ſenſe of theſe excellent Words.

The firſt clauſe of them contains a general Propoſition. *But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.*

The ſecond contains a proof of that Propoſition; *for he that cometh to God muſt*, &c.

By comparing the Propoſition, proved with the proof thereof, we ſhall come to underſtand every phraſe and word of the Text. For if we enquire,

1. What is here meant by *pleaſing God* in the general Propoſition; let us ſee what anſwers thereunto in the following words; and we ſhall find by *pleaſing God* is meant the doing of thoſe things whereby God is pleaſed; for ſaith the Apoſtle, *He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is.* Now to *come to God* is an obvious phraſe, ſignifying to worſhip God: Wherefore it being ſuppoſed (as the Apoſtle's form of arguing makes it neceſſary) that to worſhip God, or to come to him, is to pleaſe him; it muſt needs follow, that to pleaſe God ſignifies the doing of thoſe things whereby God is pleaſed: But hence we muſt not conclude, that the worſhip of God, properly ſo called, is the only thing that is pleaſing to God; becauſe the Apoſtle's intent in the proof of his general propoſition, is to give ſome particular inſtance of each part thereof, (as I ſhall ſhew all along in the Explication of theſe words). There are other things which pleaſe God beſides Worſhip, *viz.* all kinds of virtue and moral Goodneſs; ſuch as Juſtice and Mercy, Fidelity and Truth, Meekneſs and Patience, Sobriety and Temperance; and 'tis true of theſe things, as well as of Worſhip, that without faith they cannot be perſormed, becauſe

cauſe they are all ſuch things as God is pleaſed withal; and 'tis ſaid in general, That without Faith we cannot pleaſe him. From hence 'tis plain, that we are thus to underſtand the phraſe of pleaſing God, when the Apoſtle ſaith, Without Faith we cannot pleaſe him, *viz.* Without Faith it is impoſſible a man ſhould be a worſhipper of God, and a practicer of Virtue: More diſtinctly thus; Without Faith a man cannot Love God, or Fear him, or Truſt in him, or Obey him, or Honour him, in his Thoughts, Words, or Deeds: Nor can he be Righteous and Charitable, Meek and Humble, Sober and Temperate: Or in a word, That without Faith 'tis impoſſible a man ſhould be truly Religious in his life and actions. If it be enquired,

2. What the Apoſtle means, by *Faith*, without which 'tis impoſſible to pleaſe God; let us look to the following words again, and we ſhall find the Faith the Apoſtle ſpeaks of is,

1. In general, a perſuaſion of the truth of ſome propoſition, or an aſſent thereunto that it is true; for he ſaith, *He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is.* To believe therefore, to be perſuaded that this propoſition is true, *viz.* that *there is a God*, is an inſtance of the Faith whereof the Apoſtle ſpeaks.

Likewiſe he that cometh unto God muſt believe that he is *a rewarder of them that ſeek him.* To believe therefore, or to be perſuaded of this propoſition, That God is a rewarder of them that ſeek him, is an inſtance of that Faith, of which the Apoſtle ſpeaks; and conſequently by Faith is here meant in general, a perſuaſion concerning any Doctrine or Propoſition, that it is true.

2. By conſequence alſo, as to the nature of thoſe propoſitions, which the Apoſtle ſaith we muſt believe, if we will pleaſe God, we find more particularly, that the Faith without which we cannot pleaſe God, is a perſuaſion of the truth of thoſe propoſitions, which are proper arguments and motives inducing a man to do thoſe things whereby God is pleaſed; for the Apoſtle ſaith, *He that cometh unto God muſt believe that he is.* And plain it is, that to believe that there is a God, is a reaſon why men ſhould do thoſe things which pleaſe him: He ſays alſo, that he that cometh unto God, muſt *believe that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* Alike plain it is, that to believe God to be ſuch a rewarder, is a reaſon, or motive, inducing a man to do thoſe things whereby God is pleaſed; and conſequently the Faith which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, is a perſuaſion of the truth of thoſe Propoſitions or Doctrines, which are proper motives or inducements to the doing of thoſe things whereby

whereby God is pleaſed. But hence we muſt not conclude, that there are no other Doctrines or Propoſitions beſides thoſe here mentioned, that are proper motives to Religion; becauſe all that the Apoſtle intends (as I noted before) is to give ſome particular inſtances to ſhew the truth of the general propoſition. Although therefore there be other Doctrines which are motives to Godlineſs and Vertue; yet if without the belief of theſe, a man cannot be induced to do thoſe things which pleaſe God; that was ſufficient for the Apoſtle's purpoſe to prove, that without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him: And that there are other Doctrines of like uſe with theſe, I ſhall ſhew in due place.

If it be enquired,

3. Whether by *Impoſſible*, the Author of this Epiſtle means properly ſomething that is abſolutely impoſſible; or more largely, ſomething that is exceeding difficult, or highly improbable, as ſometimes the word is uſed to that purpoſe:

I anſwer; This is to be reſolved, by conſidering alſo the following propoſitions to be believed; the former of which is of that nature, that it is abſolutely neceſſary to be believed in order to Worſhip and Virtue, *viz.* That *there is a God*: Without this belief it is utterly impoſſible, it implies a contradiction, that a man ſhould be a Worſhip-

per of God, and a practicer of Virtue. But the latter of these beliefs, that *God is a rewarder*, &c. is not in the same degree necessary that the former is, because it does not imply a contradiction, That that man who does not believe that God is a rewarder of them that seek him, should be a Worshipper of God, because 'tis barely possible he may Worship God upon a belief that there is a God, and a bare hope that he is *a rewarder*, &c. But then if we consider the woful corruption and degeneracy of Mankind, and the power of those Temptations we are under, 'tis so utterly improbable that without this belief men should set themselves to do those things which please God, that according to the usual manner of speaking, it may be ranked with things impossible.

So that I do thus understand the Apostle as to what he says concerning the impossibility of pleasing God without Faith; That there are some Doctrines so necessary to be believed in order to the practice of Religion and Virtue, that it is naturally impossible a man should be a Worshipper of God, and a doer of Righteousness without the belief of them; and of this sort he hath given us one instance, *viz.* That *there is a God*; That also there are some Doctrines so necessary to be believed in order to the practice of Religion, that 'tis morally impossible a man should be a Worshipper of God, and a worker

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of righteouſneſs, without the belief of them: And of this ſort he hath alſo given us one inſtance, *viz.* That God *is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.*

Thus I have by comparing one part of the Text with another, given you, as I am perſuaded, the true ſence of the whole, and that, as I hope, with great clearneſs of truth and plainneſs of words. And according to this Explanation, the words of the Text may be interpreted according to this Paraphraſe.

Without the belief of ſome ſuch Doctrines as are proper and ſuitable motives to the worſhip of God, and the practice of Virtue, wherewith God is pleaſed; it is impoſſible any man ſhould fear God and work Righteouſneſs: For ſome Doctrines there are ſo neceſſary in order to that end, that 'tis impoſſible to conceive how a man ſhould find himſelf obliged thereto, without the belief of thoſe Doctrines: Some Doctrines alſo there are ſo neceſſary to be believed in order thereunto, that without the belief of them, no man finds himſelf encouraged to the practice of Religion: For inſtance, the Worſhip of God is a part of Religion, without which he will not be pleaſed with us; but it is plain that no man can be a worſhipper of God, without believing that there is a God; becauſe if he does not believe this, he cannot conceive himſelf bound to worſhip God.

'Tis alſo plain, that no man is likely to worſhip God, without believing that God is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him; becauſe if he does not believe this, he cannot conceive himſelf encouraged to be a worſhipper; and this is as evident in all other inſtances of Religion, that 'tis impoſſible men ſhould perform them as they ought, if they believe not thoſe Doctrines whereby they are encouraged to them.

In the words, as they are thus explain'd, ſeveral truths there be, which lye couched beſide thoſe, the ſuggeſting whereof is the main ſcope and deſign of the Text.

1*ſt*. Of all, 'Tis plainly implied, that the practice of Religion (*i. e.*) of Worſhip and Virtue, is that which pleaſeth God: For *pleaſing of God* here, is further explained by coming to him, and diligently ſeeking him; a very conſiderable inſtance of Religion. The ſame thing is true of all other Religious duties, and all Moral virtues whatſoever, that they alſo are well-pleaſing to God, and that he liketh and approveth them in us; he loveth and praiſeth us for them, that they are delightful and acceptable to him. Were the inculcating of this matter the chief deſign of the Text, I would here at large repreſent unto you, why the Religious practice, the holineſs and virtue of a Chriſtian, is acceptable and well-pleaſing

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to God. I would make it plain to you, that it must be so, because his Religious Practice is an acknowledgment of the Soveraign Authority of his Maker, since 'tis the Christians obedience to Divine Laws; because also 'tis his undeniable confession of the Goodness of God, a plain testimony of his love to God, and a visible demonstration how excellent and profitable the Laws of God are, and how good they render those persons that observe them: Because 'tis in like manner the Christians true and sincere acknowledgment of the Divine perfections. I would likewise shew you, that although God cannot be pleased with this honour done unto him by his Creatures, because of any advantage he himself receives thereby; yet he is pleased with it, because of the advantage accruing thereby to us, because he delighteth in the good of his Creatures, in their happiness and well-being; which 'tis as impossible for them to attain without the worship of God, and the practice of Virtue, as to reconcile light unto darkness, or to make contradictions to be true. If this also were the main scope of the Text, I would not leave this consideration till I had convinced you throughly, what a mighty spur to Religion and Virtue this persuasion is, that they are well-pleasing to God. I would not let you go till you granted me, that it is the noblest Ambition which can inflame the

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Souls of men to become the true Worſhippers of God, and the ſincere workers of Righteouſneſs; ſince this is your way to gratify and pleaſe ſo great and excellent a Being as the Eternal God, to ſtand high in his eſteem, to be greatly accounted of by him, to become acceptable to him, and conſiderable with him. But this is only the inſinuation, not the direct aim of the Text.

2. Theſe words do alſo intimate to us, that the practice of Religion and Virtue is the end of Faith: For the Apoſtle plainly ſpeaks of thoſe Doctrines we believe under the notion of means to arrive at Godlineſs and Righteouſneſs. When he ſays without believing God 'tis impoſſible we ſhould come unto him; he implies that it is therefore neceſſary we ſhould believe there is a God, becauſe 'tis neceſſary we ſhould worſhip him: When he ſays, without believing that God is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him, 'tis impoſſible to ſeek him diligently; he ſufficiently implies, that 'tis therefore neceſſary to believe that God is ſuch a Rewarder, becauſe 'tis neceſſary to ſeek him diligently. In a word, when he ſays without Faith 'tis impoſſible to pleaſe God; he plainly enough intimates, that therefore Faith is neceſſary, becauſe the practice of Godlineſs and Virtue is ſo, *i. e.* that Religious practice is neceſſary as the end, and Faith as the means to that end.

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I would here have ſhewn you, what the true Notion of Fundamentals in Religion is, *viz.* That only is Fundamental in Religion, which is a Doctrine neceſſary to be believed in order to a Chriſtian life; and all Doctrines neceſſary to be believed for that end, are Fundamental Doctrines: That the belief of thoſe Doctrines, is laying a foundation upon which the ſuperſtructure of Religious practice, of Worſhip and Virtue, may and ought to be erected. But that if it were required what is Fundamental, *i. e.* neceſſary to fit a man for Heaven, that then the practice of Religion and Virtue is the only thing neceſſary for that end; but that Fundamentals in Doctrines, are only thoſe beliefs that are neceſſary to Righteouſneſs and Godly living. And this I ſhould have inſiſted upon, to confute all the vain pretences and frivolous hopes of all Orthodox believers, that never yet learned to live Orthodox Lives, that have laid a ſpecious foundation of Chriſtian Faith and Knowledge to no purpoſe in the world, but to proclaim their own folly and madneſs in neglecting all thoughts of building that ſuperſtructure of Chriſtian life and practice thereupon, by which alone we can aſcend to immortality of Bliſs in that *houſe of God not made with hands eternal in the heavens.*

But this alſo is no more than inſinuated in the words of the Text; therefore I ſhall inſiſt

ſiſt no longer upon it, though ſo plainly hinted, that I could not altogether paſs it by.

3. Theſe words do expreſly declare, that ſome Doctrines there be which are fundamental to Religion, (*i. e.*) the belief whereof is neceſſary to the worſhip of God, and the practice of Virtue; and conſequently without the belief whereof, we cannot conceive how a man ſhould be induced to a Religious and Virtuous life. And this is the main ſcope and deſign of the Text, whereof I ſhall ſpeak as fully and diſtinctly as I can, ſhewing from the Text what theſe fundamental Doctrines be, in the aſſent whereunto, or the perſuaſion whereof it is moſt plain, that the nature of Faith, properly ſo called, doth conſiſt; according to the latitude of which Doctrines the extent alſo of Faith, as to Fundamentals, is to be meaſured; according to the influence of which Doctrines upon the wills of men to induce them to the worſhip of God and the practice of Virtue, the right uſe alſo, the true purpoſe and deſign of Faith is to be underſtood.

It remaineth therefore, that we duly conſider the Doctrines themſelves, the neceſſity alſo, and ſufficiency of them to induce men to Religion and Virtue. And this will fully anſwer my deſign, which is to ſhew the true nature, the due extent, and the right uſe of that Faith, which is one of thoſe Di-

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vine Qualifications and Graces whereby we are fitted for Life eternal.

All that can be thought neceſſary to be ſaid for this purpoſe, may be reduced to Four heads of Diſcourſe: whereof the

1. Shall be to inquire, What thoſe Doctrines be, which are fundamental or neceſſary to the practice of Religion and Virtue.

2. To demonſtrate that the belief of thoſe Doctrines is an adequate or ſufficient foundation thereof, or inducement thereto.

3. To give an account of thoſe other Doctrines in Chriſtian Religion, which are neceſſary to be believed, and why they are neceſſary.

4. To apply the whole Diſcourſe by an exhortation, To add unto Faith Virtue, and that Life wherewith God is pleaſed.

1. I am to ſhow what thoſe Doctrines be which are fundamental to the practice of Religion and Virtue. Before I attempt the performance whereof, it will be neceſſary for me to premiſe this Apology, That I do not here intend a Catalogue of thoſe Fundamentals which that Excellent man Mr. *Chillingworth* refuſed to give, and which he demonſtrated to the Romaniſts was a vain thing to require, almoſt impoſſible to lay down, and if it were never ſo eaſy, yet very needleſs to ſhow: For that Notion of Fundamentals, wherein he and his adverſary uſed

uſed that word, was different from that wherein I now uſe it. Fundamental with them, was any Doctrine, which upon any account was neceſſary to be believed by every Chriſtian. Theſe Doctrines I do not ſpeak of at preſent as ſuch; but I intend in due place to give an account of them, ſhewing what relation they have to thoſe Doctrines I am about to lay before you.

But by Fundamentals, I mean thoſe Articles, or Propoſitions, which are neceſſary to be believed in order to a good Life; and what theſe be, every Miniſter that pretends to be skilled in the Goſpel, (*which is the power of God to ſalvation*), if his pretence be tolerably good, may and ought to lay down: For this attempt ſignifies no other thing, than to ſhew what powerful obligations the Faith of Chriſtians engageth them by, to live *ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.*

In laying down theſe Fundamental Doctrines, I ſhall obſerve no other rule and method than what is offered here in the Text. You are to remember what I even now made plain to you, That it was not the Apoſtle's purpoſe to inſtance in all Doctrines that were neceſſary to be believed, as a Foundation of Religion and Virtue; but only in ſome that were ſo neceſſary; becauſe that was ſufficient to prove his general Propoſition, That *without faith 'tis impoſſible to pleaſe God*

God. As for thoſe others which are of like neceſſity to be believed in order to that end, I ſhall (as I ſaid) lay them down in that diſtinct Method to which I am led by the Apoſtle's Words; the great and deep Wiſdom whereof, the more I ponder, the more I admire.

For here 'tis very obſervable, that the Apoſtle when he deſigns to prove, That without Faith 'tis impoſſible to pleaſe God; he doth firſt inſtance in a propoſition neceſſary to be believed for that end, which is a Doctrine of Natural Religion, *viz.* That *there is a God.* He doth ſecondly inſtance in a Propoſition neceſſary to be believed for that end, which is a Doctrine of Revealed Religion, *viz.* That *God is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* But in what ſenſe 'tis a Doctrine of Revealed Religion, I muſt briefly explain to you, to prevent miſtakes.

That God will reward every rewardable Creature, is to ſay no other thing, but God is Juſt; and this is known by the light of nature; but in ſtrictneſs, no man is rewardable but he that is ſinleſly righteous; for he that offends, is liable to puniſhment. Now of all meer mortals, there is no man that is ſinleſly obedient: Whether therefore God will reward us if we diligently ſeek him, tho we are ſinners, this depends only upon the free will and pleaſure of God, and conſequently cannot be known by us, but through Reve-

lation: The belief therefore of this truth, That *God is a rewarder* of ſuch men as we are, if we diligently ſeek him, is the belief of a Doctrine that belongs to Revealed Religion.

It is further to be remembred by us, that the Apoſtle doth inſtance in this Propoſition, of Natural Religion, That there is a God, in behalf of all other Principles of Natural Religion that are of like neceſſity to be believed with it. Likewiſe, that the Apoſtle doth inſtance in this Propoſition of Revealed Religion, That God is a Rewarder of them that ſeek him, in behalf of all other Principles of Revealed Religion that are of like neceſſity to be believed with that.

It deſerves alſo our notice, That the Propoſition of Natural Religion which the Apoſtle inſtances in, is the firſt Principle and Foundation of Religion, neceſſary to be believed firſt of all: That alſo the Propoſition of Revealed Religion which he inſtances in, is the laſt Principle that makes up the Foundation of Faith, as I ſhall ſhew in its place: So that all the other Doctrines of Faith that are fundamental to Religion and Virtue, lye between theſe two; *viz.* The firſt Principle of Natural Religion, That there is a God; and the laſt Principle of Revealed Religion, That he is a Rewarder.

My buſineſs is to ſhew, What thoſe Principles be, which lye between the loweſt and higheſt

higheſt part of the Foundation; and they are diſcoverable what they are, by ſhewing what is of equal neceſſity to be believed with theſe Doctrines, in order to the inducing of men to the practice of Religion and Virtue.

1. I ſhall, according to this rule, ſhew what Doctrines of Natural Religion are fundamentally neceſſary to be believed, in order to Worſhip and Virtue. 2. According to the ſame rule, what thoſe Revealed Doctrines are, which are of like neceſſity to be believed for the ſame end.

The Doctrines of Natural Religion are theſe; 1. That there is a God; which is here inſtanced in. 2. That there is a Providence. 3. That ſome things there be, wherewith God is pleaſed, and ſome wherewith he is offended.

Now concerning all theſe Principles, I affirm, That they are ſo abſolutely neceſſary to be believed, that not one of them can be ſpared: 'Tis the belief of all theſe things together, from which reſulteth the neceſſary obligation of men to worſhip God, and *work righteouſneſs*; ſo that if the belief of any one of them ceaſeth, all ſenſe of obligation to pious and virtuous practice, muſt withal fail and periſh. Some there are which add unto this Foundation the belief of a life to come; but unfitly, upon theſe two accounts.

1. Becauſe the belief hereof is not in the ſame degree neceſſary to the practice of that which is pleaſing to God, as the belief of the forementioned things, for if a man had but an uncertain hope of a future life, but firmly believed the other truths, it is barely poſſible, that by the motive and inducement of ſuch belief, joined with ſuch an hope, he might be perſuaded to do thoſe things which he is convinced God would be pleaſed withal: And it ſeems probable that the Apoſtle in the firſt place doth inſtance in a ſort of Doctrines, without the belief whereof it is naturally impoſſible men ſhould conceive themſelves obliged to Godlineſs and Virtue; and all the Principles of Natural Religion are ſuch: And that in the ſecond place he inſtanceth in a ſort of Doctrines, without the belief whereof 'tis morally impoſſible men ſhould conceive themſelves ſufficiently encouraged thereto; and all the Principles of Revealed Religion are of that nature.

2. 'Tis clear enough, That the Faith of a life to come is grounded upon Revelation; for tho it appears exceeding probable to natural reaſon, yet by the diſcourſes of thoſe men that wanted a Revelation, it appears withal, that generally it was an exceeding hard matter to arrive at any certainty about it, while they were only left to the light and conduct of natural reaſon in this matter: 'Tis only the Teſtimony of God in the Reſurrection

ſurrection and Doctrine of our Saviour, that hath cleared the world from all Diſputes about it: 'Tis only the Goſpel that *hath brought life and immortality to light.* Upon theſe Reaſons I conceive this belief is not to be ranked with thoſe that I have already named under the head of Natural Principles; whereof the firſt is,

1. That *there is a God*: This, as I ſaid, is the Fundamental Principle of all Religion, without which there is no obligation to worſhip; and without the belief of which there can be no ſenſe of any ſuch obligation, without the belief hereof no man can think himſelf obliged to Virtue, ſince the denial thereof ſuppoſes, that there is no authority to which a man can be accountable for his actions. But this thing I take to be ſo clear, that there is no further neceſſity of inſiſting upon it.

Since then the belief of a Deity is the Foundation of all Religion, it would in this place be moſt adviſeable to ſhew upon what grounds the belief of this moſt important and fundamental Article of Religion ſtands, ſince all the Conſequences naturally iſſuing from it, will have more or leſs power and efficacy with us, according as we are more or leſs under the power of this belief, That there is a God. Now altho the manifeſting of theſe Reaſons, upon which this belief is

eſtabliſhed in humane nature, the diſcovering of that Rock upon which this firſt ſtone in the Foundation is laid, ſhould be ſuppoſed never ſo needleſs in this Congregation; yet conſidering the great and general importance of this Doctrine, it cannot be ſupoſed tedious to any Hearer, unleſs withal I had reaſon to ſuſpect there were any perſons here to whom the Demonſtrations of a Diety bring ſuch evil Tidings, that they would gladly embrace the moſt frivolous pretences to avoid them: Upon which Suppoſition nothing could be more needful, than to wreſt their vain and running hopes away from them, That poſſibly there is no God, by the force of that reaſon, which ſhews it to be eternally and immutably true, That there is. Wherefore tho I ſhall be ſaved much of that pains which would be otherwiſe requiſite, by the care I have formerly taken in particular Diſcourſes, to guard this part of the Foundation, and to eſtabliſh the belief of it in your minds; yet I muſt needs obſerve that *decorum*, of allotting it as conſiderable a place in my Sermon, as it hath in the Text, and as the Dignity of the Subject requires.

To believe that there is a God, is to believe that there is a Being infinitely perfect, (*i. e.*) Infinite in Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs, which ever was, and ever will be, and which is the Creator and Firſt Cauſe of all things: This is that Notion of God,

God, to which Natural Reaſon leads us, inaſmuch as by that Being which is called God, we are to underſtand that which is Infinite in all Perfections. Several there be which deſire no other Argument to prove there is ſuch a Being, beſides that Teſtimony which every man finds in his own breaſt. And indeed, the univerſal conſent of mankind in this matter, even of people whoſe Manners and Religions being as diſtant as their habitations were remote, ſhew that they were never united in this perſuaſion by Compact or Confederacy: Add to this likewiſe, the Fears of a Diety in them who could only be ſuppoſed to invent this ſtratagem of governing the world, (if an Invention it be) *viz.* in Philoſophers and Princes, who were much to blame to be afraid of their own fancies, if it was but a myſtery of State, to poſſeſs the people with the belief of a Deity. This, I ſay, ſo univerſal a Confeſſion of this Doctrine is a pregnant evidence, that 'tis indeed written in the very minds, and the ſenſe thereof interwoven into the very Natures of men; and if it be ſo, there cannot poſſibly be any other cauſe offered of ſo uniform and conſtant an effect, to ſatisfy a reaſonable man, beſides the exiſtence of ſuch a Being, which all men are perſuaded of, and who hath wrought into our Souls, when he made us, the Teſtimonies of *his Eternal Power and Godhead.*

But although the urging of this Argument of Univerſal Conſent, for the proving of a Deity, together with clear Anſwers to all Objections that can be brought to weaken it, be according to the moſt impartial Judgment, I can make, ſufficient to conclude any but an unteachable mind, that is unwilling to believe there is a God, becauſe 'tis for its intereſt there ſhould be none. And although I am verily perſuaded, that whereas indeed many there are who live like Atheiſts, yet there is ſcarce any of them (to the glory of Religion be it ſpoken) who deliberately dies an Atheiſt; yet I confeſs this Argument from Univerſal Conſent does rather ſuppoſe that there is no need of Arguments to convince an Atheiſt, than offer any unanſwerable means of Conviction to him: If ſuch a Creature there be in the World, he will ſay to all this, that the Argument ſuppoſes that to be true, which he himſelf is an example of the falſhood of, *viz.* That all men believe the Being of a God: And though it may be replied, That ſome few Monſters there are in all the products of Nature, and 'tis no more to be inferred, that the belief of a God is not the ſenſe of Mankind, becauſe he is of another opinion, than 'tis the Law of Nature that men ſhould be born with two Heads, becauſe a two-headed Monſter once appeared in the World: Yet if he ſhould be ſo immodeſt

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and ſtubborn, as to conclude againſt all the reſt of Mankind, that they are miſtaken, and he (if alone he be) is alone in the right, have we then nothing left to confute this wretched Creature, and by undeniable Reaſon to prove that Mankind is in the right, and that there is a God? Yes, we have: They are the Works of Nature, which there is no man, but muſt ſee, and can enquire into; and they demonſtrate the Being of their Maker. If it be poſſible (which for ought I know it is) to deface the Teſtimonies of a Deity which are written within us, it is not yet poſſible to blot out thoſe Teſtimonies of his Being which are left without us. Moſt plain it is, that we find our ſelves in a World contrived into admirable beauty and order, and furniſhed with that marvellous variety of things excellent and uſeful, that the whole ſcheme and fabrick of Nature, to the dulleſt Obſerver, appears to be an effect of great Wiſdom and Councel, *i. e.* of an underſtanding Being. Nothing is more plain, than that this World could not make it ſelf: Nothing is more plain, than that a Cauſe it muſt have, if of any great Effect it be reaſonable to require the Cauſe, or at leaſt to affirm that it hath one. Whatever the Cauſe of this World is, it could not make it ſelf, for that is a perfect Contradiction. By inevitable conſequence therefore it follows, That ſomething there is which is ſo perfect, that

it needed no cauſe to produce it (*i. e.*) that there is an Infinite Everlaſting Being, which is God the Maker of all things. But to purſue this Argument in a more obvious, but equally convincing manner: We ordinarily diſtinguiſh between the Works of Art, and the Works of Nature: By the Works of Art, we mean thoſe Effects that are produced by the skill of Man; by the Works of Nature, thoſe Effects which are conſtantly preſerved and performed to our hands. Now that thoſe which we call the Works of Nature, are the Effects of a Divine Skill (as we confeſs the Works of Art are of Human Skill) is demonſtrable beyond all reaſonable Contradiction. If I ſee a Statue curiouſly carved, a Picture elegantly deſcribed, or a Monument with an Ingenious Inſcription engraven upon it, I muſt ſo neceſſarily conclude, that the Statuary, the Painter, and the Graver, hath been there, that if I ſhould either affirm, that theſe things came by chance, or were eternally what they are, I ſhould be in danger of being ſent to *Bedlam*. But this I will offer at any time to demonſtrate, That the meaneſt, the moſt minute, the moſt contemptible Works of Nature, have really more beauty and uniformity, more variety, and to ſay nothing elſe, more wonder in them, than the moſt exquiſite and rich Inventions, the moſt magnificent and ingenious Contrivances of Human Art. Bring

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me the vileſt and pooreſt Inſect, that flies above the ground, or crawls upon it; bring me the ſimpleſt Flower, the moſt common Plant, that is ſcattered abroad in the Fields, I will ſhew beyond contradiction, that the beauty, the proportion, the parts, the growth, and the motions of theſe the moſt contemptible Works of Nature, do infinitely tranſcend all the Performances of the richeſt Humane Fancy. That the nearer we look into the Works of Art, the more unpoliſhed and rude they appear to be, as he that would pleaſe himſelf with gazing on a Picture muſt view it at a diſtance; but if he come too near, the ruggedneſs of the Paint makes it look like an ugly thing, and ſo it is more or leſs in all the Contrivances of Human Art.

But as all Philoſophers know, the more minutely we ſearch into the Works of Nature, even thoſe that are moſt contemptible to ſee to, and which vulgar eyes paſs by without obſerving; if they be the Snow that falls on the ground, the Wings of the ſmalleſt Fly, or the meaneſt Animal that creeps upou the Earth, the more advantageouſly and minutely they are ſeen, the more uniformity, ſmoothneſs, beauty of colour and figure, and variety of parts, diſcover themſelves in them; which plainly ſhews how much the Works of Nature tranſcend thoſe of Art.

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Now ſhall I, who confeſs here is more of Councel, Wiſdom and Power, ſeen in theſe moſt ordinary Works of Nature, than in the beſt effects of Human Skill, ſhall I be aſhamed not to confeſs the Art of Man in theſe, and yet doubt whether thoſe be the Products of a greater Artiſt? What ſhall I then ſay of the Earth that bears me, and nouriſhes me; of the Air that is extended for me to breath in; of the Clouds that *drop their fatneſs* upon me; of the Heavens that cheriſh me; of the Sun that divideth the Day and Night, and gives light and heat to the World, and of all the Ornaments of Heaven and Earth; and what of my ſelf, who am endued with a Body of wonderful contrivance, and with thoſe greater privileges of Reaſon, Will and Underſtanding? Are all theſe things too without an Artiſt that made them thus? No madneſs is comparable to the but doubting that they are: He that does ſo, muſt either want his Senſes, or his Soul. He muſt either deny that theſe things are what he ſees them, Effects of great Wiſdom and Underſtanding; or he muſt affirm, That ſuch Effects there may be without a Cauſe proportionable to them; he muſt either ſay that ſomething made it ſelf, or that there was no need that theſe things ſhould be made (*i.e.*) he muſt affirm, that which is impoſſible may be otherwiſe, and hold Contradictions to be true.

Well

Well then might the Apoſtle ſay, *The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being known by the things which he hath made, even his eternal power and Godhead.* So that when I conſider the mighty evidence of thoſe Arguments for the Exiſtence of a Deity, which are drawn from the Works of Nature, I cannot ſee wherein they differ from Demonſtrations, though ſome there be who are not pleaſed to call them ſo; and I do not queſtion, but he that can be an obſtinate Atheiſt againſt them, would alſo, if it were for for his intereſt, deny that three and three is ſix, or contradict the plaineſt Propoſition in Mathematicks. Upon the whole matter, when I conſider the Works of God, I would rather chuſe (if there were any choice in theſe matters) to believe all the Tales of the *Roman* Legends, as my Lord *Bacon*, obſerves, and I add, tho *Tranſubſtantiation* were caſt into the Scale, than believe that this great Body is without a Mind that inform'd it.

And thus at laſt I have ſaid ſomething more than I intended upon the firſt Doctrine of Natural Religion, That there is a God, proving it to be true by natural Reaſon, as indeed 'tis only to be proved: For we cannot prove it by Revelation to a Gainſayer, ſince to attempt that way, is to beg what we ſhould prove, *viz.* That there is a God whoſe Revelation this is. This therefore is the

the firſt Principle of Religion, without the belief whereof there can be no obligation conceived to Faith and Worſhip, and the practice of Vertue. I proceed to ſhow what the next are, in which I ſhall be very brief, becauſe the truth of thoſe is very evidently conſequent from the demonſtration of this.

2. It is fundamentally neceſſary to Religion and Virtue, That we believe there is a Providence, *i. e.* that God is the Governor of that World which he made, and ſtill preſerves; and more particularly, that he governs Mankind in a way ſuitable to his Nature, by preſcribing Moral Laws to him, and expecting obedience from him; that he ſees, and takes notice of all our Actions; that he obſerves all that we do, and all that we ſuffer, and ſuperintends all the Affairs of Humane Life.

And if there be a God, it is clear by natural Reaſon, that there is ſuch a Providence, and that upon ſeveral grounds. I ſhall inſtance but in one.

It is not conſiſtent with the Divine Wiſdom to make ſuch a frame of things, as were not fit to be regarded and governed by him afterwards, (*i. e*) to be a Creator, and not to be the Lord and Governor of his Creation. More particularly; It is repugnant to the Truth and Wiſdom of God to create ſuch a being as man, whoſe Faculties teach him, that he is capable of honouring his Creator

Creator, and receiving good from him, and then not to regard whether he be honoured by his Creature or no, and to leave him to the Conduct of Chance for the procuring of that which is good for himſelf. But 'tis alſo plain and evident from the Continuation of the Works of Nature in their ſerviceableneſs and uſefulneſs to men, that God does ſtill govern the material World, and that in order to the good of men, which is a clear inſtance of his Providence over them, and that he minds and regards them. Now without the belief hereof it is evident, that no man can think himſelf obliged to the practice of Religion and Virtue; for though there be a God, yet if he minds not our Actions, there is no reaſon why we ſhould fear to offend him, or take any care to pleaſe him; or how can a man be perſuaded to worſhip God, if he believes not that God regards his Worſhip? What reaſon can be pretended, why he ſhould pray unto him, unleſs he be convinc'd that God hears his Prayers? What conſolation can he have under any diſtreſs, what truſt can he place upon the Divine Power and Goodneſs, if he thinks that God is not concern'd in Human Affairs, and hath no reſpect to the Calamities of men, and governs nothing by his Providence? In brief, 'tis moſt plain, that whatſoever obligation to Worſhip and Virtue ariſeth from the belief that there a God, ſuppoſeth alſo

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the belief of Divine Providence, that God is the Governour of Mankind, and taketh notice of their Actions.

3. It is fundamentally neceſſary to Religion and Virtue, that men believe that with ſome things God is pleaſed, and that with others he is offended (*i. e.*) that there is a difference between good and evil, which can by no means be altered, and taken away: That ſome things are ſo good, that they can never become evil; and ſome things ſo evil, that they can never become good: And if we believe there is a God, ſuch muſt be our perſuaſions concerning good and evil; for if Juſtice be an indiſpenſible Perfection of the Divine Nature, then is there an eternal relation between a promiſe, and the performance thereof; and 'tis impoſſible that Fidelity and Truth ſhould ever ceaſe to be fitting, lovely, and beautiful things. If the Goodneſs of God be neceſſary to his Nature, then the relation between Compaſſion, and an indigent Creature, is Eternal; and Charity and Mercy are things immutably good. And thus in all other inſtances of Virtue it might be made to appear from the Perfections of the Divine Nature, whereof they are the imitations, that they can no more ceaſe to be good, than God can ceaſe to be what he is; and conſequently, that the Diſpoſitions and Practices contrary to them, are immutably evil. It can never be good to condemn the Innocent,

cent to oppreſs the Weak, to be cruel and implacable, to be ſunk into ſenſuality or worldlineſs: No Power in Heaven or in Earth, no Will, no Authority can make it ever ceaſe from being a moſt comely, fitting, due thing for a Creature that is endued with Reaſon, to praiſe his God, to honour him in all his Perfections, to love his Infinite Goodneſs, to truſt in his Infinite Power and Wiſdom, to reverence his great and holy Majeſty, and to obey his Will in all things: the rectitude and duty hereof cannot be altered any more, than the truth of a Mathematical Propoſition; upon this belief depends the perſuaſion, that Worſhip, and all Virtue and Goodneſs is pleaſing to God, and the contrary diſpleaſing to him; and this is as certain, as 'tis certain that God is immutably good, and loves that which is moſt excellent and perfect.

This ſenſe of good and evil is that alſo which is wrought into our very Natures; the Heathens themſelves, who wanted a Revelation, were yet ſubject to this Law of their Minds, being terrified and puniſhed by the Conſcience of evil, when they tranſgreſſed that Law; cheriſhed and rewarded by the Conſcience of good, when they obſerved it: It was this ſenſe that gave them courage and aſſurance when they did well; and that touched their guilty minds with remorſe, and made them tremble, when they did ill.

I will not trouble my ſelf to enquire how far 'tis in the power of cuſtom in Sin to blot out theſe Apprehenſions in the minds of men; but let a man's Conſcience be *ſeared* never ſo incurably, though he hath no inward ſenſe to inform him perpetually of the difference between good and evil, yet that difference is demonſtrable to him from the Being of a God, as I have ſhewn, and that is the moſt irrefragable way of proving it againſt the moſt hardned Sinner. But plain it is, that the belief hereof is abſolutely neceſſary to the pleaſing of God: For what though a man believe there is a God, and that there is a Providence which governs the World, if yet he be not perſuaded, that ſome things there are, by the doing of which God is pleaſed, he will never take care to pleaſe him by the doing of thoſe things? If he is not perſuaded ſome things there are, by the doing whereof God is diſpleaſed, he can never be afraid of offending him by the doing of thoſe things: If he thinks there is no difference between good and evil in the nature of things, he cannot think himſelf obliged to make, or obſerve any ſuch difference in his Actions; unleſs he believes, that to worſhip God, and practice Virtue, is good in it ſelf, acceptable to God, and rewardable by him, nothing can effectually oblige him thereunto: unleſs he believe the contrary to be evil, diſpleaſing, and puniſhable, no religious belief what-

whatſoever can deter him from it; So that to believe this difference between good and evil, between things that God is pleaſed withal, and wherewith he is diſpleaſed, is of abſolute neceſſity to Religion and Virtue, or the doing of thoſe things whereby God is pleaſed: And all theſe things are ſo fundamentally neceſſary in order to that end, that it is naturally impoſſible, and it implies a contradiction, that a man ſhould be a Worſhipper of God, and a doer of Righteouſneſs, without the belief of them: But from the firm perſuaſion of theſe things, there ariſeth a full obligation to do all thoſe things whereby God is pleaſed.

But alas! ſuch is the degeneracy of Mankind, our propenſity to wickedneſs, the Temptations of the World, *&c.* that if we believe no other motives beſides theſe in order to Religion and Virtue, it is very unlikely that they ſhould have their effects upon us. We know we are Sinners, and ſhould we be ready to juſtify our continuance in Sin, by pretending that we know not whether God would pardon us upon our repentance: We know our beſt Actions are imperfect, and we ſhould be ready to queſtion, whether God would accept what we could do, and make that a pretence of neglecting to do what we might: We know our own Frailties, and the difficulties of Religion and Virtue, and ſhould in

all likelihood deliver our ſelves from all care of pleaſing God, under colour of the impoſſibility of performing it by Humane Endeavours: We know the enjoyments of pleaſures and profits of Sin are preſent to us, and we ſhould be apt to queſtion, Whether it would be any thing better, if we ſhould forego them, when the conſcience of our duty required it. It hath pleaſed therefore the All-wiſe and All-good God, out of his tender Mercy and Compaſſion to Sinners, to remove all theſe hindrances, and by Revelation to ſupply all theſe defects, and ſatisfy us concerning all theſe doubts, *viz.* by adding to the Principles of Natural Religion theſe following Motives and Inducements to Godlineſs and Virtue:

1. That God will pardon the ſins of all thoſe that repent.

2. That he will accept our ſincere endeavours to pleaſe him.

3. That by his Spirit he will aſſiſt us in them. And,

4. That he will at laſt reward us for them.

All which are the Doctrines of revealed Religion, and make up the entire foundation of Faith, having all their dependance upon Faith in Chriſt.

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The Third Sermon.

Heb. XI. 6.

But without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him: for he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.

I Come in the ſecond place to ſhew, what Doctrines of Revealed Religion are fundamental to Godlineſs and Virtue; thoſe are ſuch which are immediately neceſſary to be believed in order to the removing or ſubverting of thoſe Doubts which would hinder men from the care of Piety and Virtue, notwithſtanding their belief of the natural Principles of Religion. If we ſuppoſe a man to believe a God, a Providence, and the difference between good and evil, we muſt needs conclude this man lies under a very powerful obligation to the practice of Worſhip and Virtue; and if the efficacy of theſe Motives be not ſubverted by other Principles deſtructive of all care to pleaſe God, it may be expected that the man who be-

lieveth thus much, ſhould indeed be a Worſhipper of God, and a Practiſer of Virtue: But if it be moſt true, that men are, through the ſad degeneracy and corruption of their Natures, extreamly averſe from that which is good, and prone to that which is evil, even all Mankind, more or leſs, and conſequently, that they are very ready to lay hold upon all pretences to excuſe themſelves the Service of God, and obedience to his Will? If it be true alſo, that there are ſeveral Queſtions in Religion, which unleſs they be ſatisfied, the doubting of them will afford ſo many pretences to throw off all care to live vertuouſly and godly; and that theſe Queſtions cannot be ſatisfied, nor conſequently the Doubts removed, by the Principles of Natural Religion: then it follows, that thoſe Principles; though the belief of them be abſolutely neceſſary, yet by reaſon of the preſent evil ſtate of Mankind, are not ſufficient to conſtrain them to the practice of Religion and Virtue, but muſt be aſſiſted and ſtrengthned by ſuch Principles of Revealed Religion, the belief whereof will wholly remove all thoſe Pretences which would be alledged in behalf of an ungodly vicious life.

It might be pretended by the natural man, who believes that there is a God, a Providence, and that ſome things are pleaſing, and others diſpleaſing to him: That theſe are not ſuffi-

ſufficent Reaſons why he ſhould become religious and virtuous; becauſe knowing himſelf to be a Sinner, he could not tell whether God would pardon the Sins he is guilty of, without which it would ſignify little to his advantage to endeavour to pleaſe him for the future: Clear it is by Natural light, that God is a hater of Sin, but whether he will pardon a Sinner depending meerly upon his Free-will, the belief thereof muſt neceſſarily depend upon Revelation. Almighty God hath by Revelation made known to us, that he will pardon the Sins of men upon their repentance.

This therefore is the firſt Principle of Revealed Religion, that is fundamental to Godlineſs and Virtue, That God is ready to pardon the Sins of men upon their repentance.

But by the natural man, *i. e.* one that believes there is a God; it might further be alledged, That though he were aſſured that God would forgive him all his paſt ſins upon his return to obedience; yet he is ignorant what degree of obedience it is with which God will be pleaſed for the future: A perfect and unſinning Righteouſneſs he knows no man is able to arrive unto in this ſtate of imperfection; and whether God will accept of our doing what we are able to do, conſidering all our evil Circumſtances, we cannot know, unleſs he is pleaſed to inform us that

he will: Almighty God hath therefore by Revelation made known to us, that he will accept of the ſincere endeavours of men in the practice of Religion and Virtue.

And ſo the ſecond Principle of revealed Religion, the belief whereof is fundamentally neceſſary to a good life, is this, That God is ready to accept of ſincere obedience.

But conſidering the great Temptatations we are beſet withal, the natural averſation in us to good, and propenſity to evil, the bad Examples of the World; the power of Cuſtom, the prevelancy of Paſſions, the frailties of Humane Nature; It is further queſtionable, whether Humane Endeavours can arrive at ſuch a meaſure of Righteouſneſs and Obedience, which may juſtly be called ſincerity in doing the whole Will of God; and if that Righteouſneſs be impoſſible to us in our preſent Circumſtances, without which God will not be pleaſed with us, there is but little comfort in the belief that he will pardon us upon repentance, and accept of our ſincere endeavours of obedience; there are but weak motives to thoſe endeavours. Almighty God therefore, to encourage us againſt the fears of our own frailties, and the temptatations of this World, hath been pleaſed to reveal unto us, that he will afford us the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit in a manner and

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measure proportionable to all the Difficulties of Religion and Virtue.

And so the third Principle of Revealed Religion, the belief whereof is necessary to Godliness, and Virtue is, That God is ready to assist our endeavours of doing his will.

Lastly, it is possible to be alledged by the natural man, That though all these things be true, yet he hath no sufficient inducement to Religion and Virtue, unless he were assured, that all his self-denial, his resolution, and overcoming his evil Appetites, his foregoing the present pleasures of Sin, his diligence and constancy in well-doing, would be recompenced by obtaining of better things in the room of those advantages he foregoes to please God in the doing of his duty.

To take away this Plea, Almighty God hath moreover revealed unto us, that he will bestow a Crown of life immortal, of endless glory and happiness upon every one that perseveres in well-doing. And the last Principle of revealed Religion, the belief whereof is necessary to the doing of those things whereby God is pleased, is this, That *God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Which is the Proposition or Doctrine of Revealed Religion instanced in by the Apostle, and that, as I told you, in behalf of all other Doctrines of Revealed Religion of like necessity to be believed.

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And thus I have ſhewn you how all thoſe other fundamental Doctrines of Faith, without which we cannot do thoſe things that pleaſe God, are comprehended in, and lie between thoſe which are mentioned in the Text, *viz.* the loweſt of them, *That God is:* and the higheſt and laſt of them, *That he is a rewarder*, &c.

Having thus ſhewn you what Doctrines of Revealed Religion are fundamentally neceſſary to be believed, to encourage men to the practice of Piety and Virtue; I ſhall ſpeak more diſtinctly, and yet briefly, to each of them; ſhewing how they are to be underſtood, what grounds we have to believe them, and what force and efficacy the belief of them hath to perſuade us to Godlineſs and Virtue. And,

1. That God will pardon the ſins of thoſe that repent. Without Revelation we cannot have aſſurance thereof, becauſe it cannot be concluded from mere natural light, that God will actually pardon a Sinner: The reaſon is, becauſe a Sinner is obnoxious and liable to juſt puniſhment, and to inflict a juſt puniſhment is conſiſtent with Goodneſs: So that we cannot argue merely from the goodneſs of the Divine Nature, which is otherways abundantly expreſſed to us, that God will remit that puniſhment, becauſe 'tis not inconſiſtent with his Goodneſs not to remit it. That God therefore would pardon the

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ſins of men, and remit his right to puniſh them, as they deſerv'd, depended merely upon his own pleaſure, whether he would or not, and conſequently it muſt be a ſecret to us, till he was pleaſed to manifeſt it to us by Revelation. And we that do believe, that God will pardon the ſins of thoſe that repent, do believe it upon this ground, That the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is the true Revelation of God's Will to Mankind, in which Goſpel it is plainly declared, that God will pardon thoſe that repent. The great and evident deſign of the whole Goſpel being this, to *call ſinners to repentance* upon this motive, That they ſhall obtain remiſſion of ſins, if they obey that call to repentance which God hath given them by his Son Jeſus. That which is promiſed, is Pardon; the condition upon which it is promiſed, is Repentance; both which afford a powerful motive to the practice of thoſe things which pleaſe God.

For that God will pardon a Sinner, what doth it ſignify but this, That he will not reckon his former ſins to him, and that all his future acts of obedience ſhall be reckon'd to him, as if he had never been guilty of any ſin. Now plain it is, that hereby all thoſe Jealouſies of the power and ſeverity of God, which can diſhearten the Sinner from ſeeking to be reconciled unto him by ſubmiſſion and repentance, are utterly removed: Hereby

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he is assured, that God is neither inxorable, nor implacable; his prayers will be heard, his repentance will be accepted, and there is a certain way opened by which he may return into the favour of God. Now he that believes this, is under the power of a strong motive to live so as to please God for the future: For as nothing doth more deeply ingage men in an obstinate and unreclaimable course of wickedness, than the apprehension that they have sinned beyond hope of pardon; so nothing is more apt to soften them into dispositions of repentance, than the kind and merciful offers of forgiveness which he makes, who hath it both in his right, and in his power to destroy them.

This we are sensible of in the carriage of men towards one another; and why should we not suffer as kindly impressions from the Gentleness and Charity of God, as we do from the good nature of men? Certain it is, that no one man hath been so rude and ungrateful to another, as every Sinner hath been to his Maker; and as true it is, that no misery can equal that which would befal him from the unappeasedness of God's anger; and therefore no Gentleness and Mercy, no tenderness and Charity is comparable to that which God hath expressed towards him, in proclaiming himself ready to pardon upon repentance. 'Tis true, we see there are such inflexible Natures in the World, as are not

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to be mended by forgiveneſs, and the kindeſt uſage; there are men of ſuch incorrigible Tempers, that are not at all the better for God's pardon, or the Kings, but then theſe are veary hateful perſons, and deſerve not to be pitied.

But if men are reclaimable by kindneſs (as all men ſhould be) what can ſooner melt them into thoughts and purpoſes of amendment, than that their great and bountiful Creator, againſt whom no man can ſin without being guilty of the greateſt baſeneſs, becauſe he ſins againſt the greateſt goodneſs; againſt whom no man can ſin without expoſing himſelf to the greateſt miſeries, becauſe he ſins againſt the greateſt Power: that he, I ſay, ſhould bear ſo tender a regard to his loſt and undone Creatures, as to forbear his right to puniſh them, and allure them to amendment by declaring that he will do ſo, becauſe he *delighteth not in the death of a ſinner*, but had rather he ſhould turn, and live: This, if any thing, muſt needs work upon our hearts, and humble our wills, and diſſolve our affections into a diſpoſition of the moſt ready and dutiful obedience to him for the future.

Again, if we conſider the condition upon which this pardon is offered to Sinners in the Goſpel, the belief thereof muſt needs be a ſtrong ſoundation of Godlineſs and Virtue. For that repentance, upon the condition whereof

whereof pardon is promiſed, is neither more nor leſs than a real converſion from the love and practice of Sin and Unrighteouſneſs, to the love and practice of Virtue and Holineſs: It is neither made up of confeſſion of ſin, and ſorrow for ſin, or wiſhing and propoſing to be better, nor of external Penances, fruitleſs Ceremonies, vain Commutations, purchaſing Diſpenſations, and buying Indulgencies; not one, or all of theſe put together, is repentance. Any man that hath his eyes in his head, may plainly perceive, that the Repentance to which pardon is promiſed in the Goſpel, is altogether as broad, and as long, as to *deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world.*

So that God Almighty hath not iſſued out his pardon to any one Sinner in abſolute and irreſpective terms, and then left it to his good nature, whether he will thank him for it or no, whether he will be kind, and leave his ſins; or ungrateful, and continue in them: And they are very fooliſh, who fancy themſelves ſuch Darlings of Heaven, that for their ſakes God had no reſpect to the holineſs of his own Nature, the honour of his Laws, and the wiſdom of his Government, in determining to pardon them, and receive them into his grace and favour. Now to prevent all ſuch preſumtion and fond conceit, it is as plainly revealed to us in the Goſpel, that God will not loſe his right to our obedience,

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as that he will forbear to uſe his right to puniſh us; and that he will forbear that no longer, when he ſees *his goodneſs doth* not *lead us to repentance.* The ſame Divine Revelation which aſſureth us God is ſo good, that he will pardon a Sinner; doth likewiſe aſſure us he is ſo juſt and wiſe, as to pardon him only upon his repentance: And indeed, to pardon the incorrigible is not mercy, but weakneſs; he only is in a compaſſionable condition, that is ſorry for his ſins, and ſins no more.

Seeing then Repentance conſiſteth in the practice of Religion and Virtue, and that is the indiſpenſable condition of our pardon, and that out Pardon is infallibly ſecure upon that Condition: From the belief of all this, there ariſeth a moſt pregnant and forcible engagement to the greateſt care we can exert of living in the love and fear of God, and keeping his Commandments.

2. The ſecond Principle of Revealed Religion, the belief whereof is neceſſary to excite us to the practice of Godlineſs and Virtue, is this; That God is ready to accept of ſincere obedience. This likewiſe is only to be known by Revelation; ſeeing, if God had pleaſed, he might have left us to the rigour of that original Law of Righteouſneſs which required unſinning duty, and according to which no Sinner can be juſtified; (*i.e.*) he might have meaſured our Repentance

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(the Condition of our Pardon) by our amendment, according to the ſtrictneſs of that Law, without making any abatements for Human Frailty, for invincible Ignorance, for ſurprize, and thoſe undueneſſes of paſſion, and thoſe inadvertencies which are things of daily incurſion. But had it been thus, little comfort could we have had from the belief that God will pardon us upon our repentance and obedience for the future, if he would accept of nothing for that repentance and obedience which was ſhort of that abſolute perfection, which 'tis morally impoſſible for any man in this ſtate of imperfection to arrive unto: For he that proffers a benefit upon terms impoſſible to the Receiver, does but diſquiet him the more, taking away with the one hand what he giveth with the other. Therefore Almighty God, further to encourage us to repentance, and the practice of Religion and Virtue, hath not only promiſed to pardon our former ſins upon that condition, but he hath ſo deſcribed to us in the Goſpel, what that life is which for the future he will accept and be pleaſed withal, that we have no reaſon to be deterred from attempting his Service by any jealouſies of his auſterity and rigour towards us: That which he requires of us, is to *love him with all our hearts*; from whence it follows, That the ſervice and duty he expects from us, is no other than what is a natural emanation from, and a real expreſſion

preſſion of ſuch a love to him, which is to do what we are able, that we may *ſerve him in holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our life.* Now to love God with all our hearts, *i.e.* to love him above all things, is a very poſſible, and the moſt reaſonable thing in the World; That obedience therefore muſt be ſo too, which is the natural effect of ſuch a love to God: That obedience which is the effect of due love to God, is conſiſtent with ſins of mere frailty, of unaffected ignorance, of unavoidable ſurpriſe; becauſe theſe ſins neither proceed from an evil will, nor are wholly vincible in our preſent ſtate; but that obedience which is the effect of due love to God, cannot conſiſt with deliberate, much leſs with preſumptuous ſins. It cannot conſiſt with wilful, much leſs with cuſtomary tranſgreſſions of known and open Laws; it cannot conſiſt with ſins proceeding from affected ignorance, much leſs with ſins againſt knowledge, which 'tis in a man's power to avoid: It cannot conſiſt with theſe kind of ſins, becauſe 'tis clear, that the reaſon why men commit them, is not becauſe they cannot, but becauſe they will not forbear them: But he that loves God with all his heart, will do what he can to pleaſe him; and he that doth ſo, is accepted by Almighty God, *i.e.* he is reckon'd by him a righteous man, and according to the moderation and gentleneſs of the Chriſtian

Law, not accounted a Sinner; in which ſenſe we are to underſtand thoſe words of the Apoſtle St. *John*, *He that is born of God, ſinneth not:* So that as for ſins of infirmity, which do indeed ſtand as much condemned, and will as as certainly exclude us from the favour of God, according to the terms of the Original Law, or the firſt Covenant, if God ſhould deal with us by thoſe meaſures, for thoſe ſins; I ſay, they are conſiſtent with the favour of God, to us according to the terms of the Chriſtian Law, or the Second Covenant; becauſe *we have an advocate with the father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous*, who is our *High-Prieſt*, and is *touched with the feeling of our infirmities*; through whoſe interceſſion they are remitted upon our keeping from all wilful ſins, and our endeavour after perfection: But *if we ſin wilfully, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin*; *i. e.* the Sacrifice offered for us, will not avail to make ſuch ſins conſiſtent with a juſtifiable ſtate: No; they muſt be actually repented of, and forſaken; 'tis only upon thoſe terms that our Sacrifice remaineth in force and power to obtain our reconciliation to God. Here I confeſs I have juſt occaſion to proceed upon a Diſcourſe concerning the difference between ſins of weakneſs, and ſins of wilfulneſs; to ſhew as exactly as the caſe will bear, wherein lies that ſincerity of obedience which God is ready to accept, and which he will be pleaſed with us for

for: But this would be to ſlide into an Argument that belongs not to the general deſign of that ſubject I am now upon, and would alſo draw out the diſcourſe upon this Head into an unfitting length.

To ſupply therefore the want of a particular diſcuſſion of thoſe caſes that belong to this matter, I ſhall need do no more than put you in mind, that the ſincere obedience which God will accept, is that which proceedeth from a true Love to God. Now if it be true (as true it is) that the greateſt danger of defeating the purpoſe of this Faith, that God is ready to accept of ſincere obedience, to oblige us to obedience, lyes on this ſide, leſt men ſhould miſtake that for ſincere obedience which is not, (*i. e.*) reckon thoſe to be meer infirmities, which are wilful Sins, and indulge themſelves in known Vices under a pretence, that 'tis not in their power to avoid them: This danger may be in ſome ſort prevented, by exhorting of you to *keep your ſelves in the love of God*, by thoſe many ſtrong and clear Motives thereunto, which every Chriſtian may be under the power of. For he that truely loves God, is under the conſtraint of an inward Law, though of the higheſt liberty, yet of the greateſt neceſſity to do every thing whereby God is pleaſed; his love to God, while he cheriſhes and maintains it in him, will guard and ſecure him from all wilful Sin

moſt diligently and carefully: It will keep him far from the brink of danger, and from any approaches to preſumption. It needs not be informed, what are the preciſe limits between good and evil; it is too curious, in doing well to want the knowledge, how far we may go without doing ill: Love is the Nobleſt Principle of well doing; it gives largely without pinching; it obeys liberally without grudging; it ſtudies not what liberty may be taken without diſpleaſing, ſo much as how to pleaſe abundantly; and in doubtful caſes it always determines on the beſt and ſafeſt ſide, *viz.* on that ſide where our love is a party: And thus we are to underſtand thoſe words of the Scripture, that *love is the fulfilling of the law, i. e.* 'tis a ſafe, 'tis an infallible Principle of ſincere and univerſal Obedience.

Now is not the belief of this Doctrine, That God will accept of our ſincere endeavours of obedience, a mighty encouragement to the practice of Religion and Virtue, ſince hereby we are aſſured not only that our former Sins ſhall not hinder our Reconciliation to God; but neither alſo ſhall our infirmities and frailties for the future ſeparate us from the favour of God? How does this belief deliver us from all fears of ſerving a rigorous and an auſtere Maſter, that will not conſider our frailties, nor make abatement for the evil circumſtances we are in? No; God

God is very earneſtly deſirous of the good of his Creatures; he will not only pardon them, but he will not impoſe impoſſible or grievous Tasks upon them; he conſiders we are but duſt, and makes allowance for our degenerate natures; he requires no more of us, than what ſuch Creatures, as we are able to do, and indeed, than what is neceſſary to make us juſtifiable before him, to make us capable of entring into his Kingdom.

How cheerfully therefore ſhould we ſet our ſelves to obey him whoſe Charity to us is ſo large, whoſe Government over us is ſo gentle, whoſe *Yoke is ſo eaſie and light*? How reſolutely ſhould we betake our ſelves to that practice of Religion and Virtue, which although it will admit of many imperfections, yet if it proceeds from a ſincere diſpoſition to pleaſe God in all things, will certainly be accepted by him that is our Maker, and the Lord of all things; by whom to be owned and approved, to be regarded and beloved, to be juſtified and commended, is the higheſt Glory that a Creature can aſpire unto.

3. The third Principle of revealed Religion, fundamental to our encouragement to the practice of Religion and Virtue is, That God is ready to aſſiſt by his Holy Spirit the ſincere endeavours of men to pleaſe him: Though a man were aſſured that God pardoned Sin upon Repentance; though he be-

lieved that Repentance was to be measured by sincerity, which though it excludes wilful Sin, yet it excludes not imperfections and humane frailties: Yet if he believed this very sincerity was above an human attainment, and that it was morally impossible for a man to be universally good, so as to keep himself free from a guilty Conscience, this would very much discourage him from endeavouring any thing in this kind.

The truth is, considering the degeneracy of Human nature, the strength of our Passions, the unreadiness of our Reason, the importunity of Temptations, and the vigilance of evil Spirits; If men were left meerly to themselves, and the Providence of God was no more concerned for the cherishing and maintaining good Principles and good Affections in men, than 'tis about any other matter, the happiest temper'd men would make but very inconsiderable Improvements in Virtue and Holiness, if any at all; and the general inability of men towards that which is good, is not only testified by the Scripture but may be collected by experience: Now what can more effectually remove the discouragement arising from this Consideration, than to be assured, that if we set our selves honestly and uprightely to keep a good Consence in all our ways towards God and man, the Providence of God will be concerned for us in so special a manner, that he will

will beſtow upon us the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit to Crown our Endeavours with ſucceſs and perſeverance, (*i. e.*) ſuch Divine help as ſhall anſwer our needs, and bear a full proportion to all the difficulties we muſt go through with: That God will do this for us, is knowable only by revelation; and it being promiſed, we have no reaſon to doubt of the reality of the Promiſe, becauſe we are ignorant of the manner how the holy Spirit worketh upon the minds of men ſo unperceptibly, as that his motions can only be known by the effects of them, *viz.* our good purpoſes and practices. This ought to be no prejudice to the belief of the Holy Spirit's aſſiſting good men in a courſe of Religion and Virtue; for though one man cannot perſwade another man, or convey his own thoughts into another's mind, but by making way by his ſenſes; yet the holy Spirit can inform and perſwade us by immediate impreſſions upon our minds, without making uſe of our ſenſes, or any thing elſe that belongs to our bodily frame: Now that God hath promiſed his Spirit for all thoſe purpoſes, which are neceſſary, to our ſpiritual improvement and happineſs, is plainly underſtood by that ſaying of our Saviour to his Diſciples, *If ye being evil know how to give good things to your Children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Now the good things which earth-

ly Parents are there ſuppoſed to be ſo ready and willing to impart to their Children, being ſuch as are generally neceſſary for the maintenance of Life, as Bread, *&c.* In like manner, by the holy Spirit which our heavenly Father is ſo ready to beſtow upon his Children, we muſt underſtand all Spiritual helps neceſſary for our improvement in Religion and Virtue, *viz.* which hold the ſame proportion to the good of our Souls, which Bread, *&c.* holds to the welfare of our Bodies; this upon our asking, (*i. e.*) upon our ſincere endeavours after it, we may promiſe our ſelves from the bounty of God to us, ſince he hath promiſed it to us, *viz.* ſuch grace and ſpiritual help as ſhall be ſufficient for us. God will give to none of us leſs, and he is unreaſonable that expects more: Now is not this evidently a ſtrong Motive to Godlineſs and Virtue, that God himſelf will cheriſh and maintain us, will help and ſupport us, will proſper and guard us by the influences of his Holy Spirit upon us?

Have we ſuch a Patron and Defender to overlook and care for us, that we do not fall by our Spiritual Enemies for want of neceſſary help? and yet can we be diſheartned and diſmay'd? Can our Courage and Reſolution leave us? Can our hearts ſink within us, when ſuch powerful Aids are near, when ſuch mighty encouragements are by us? Is it not

not from hence plain, that no man can fail of doing thoſe things wherewith God will be pleaſed, and his favour obtained, but it muſt be through his own fault and ſlothfulneſs in not obtaining by his own endeavours, or in not improving by his good Actions, the graces of the holy Spirit wherewith he might have arrived to a Regenerate eſtate, and perſevered therein. For God hath not made a feigned, but a ſincere promiſe of his Spirt to work and encreaſe his graces in us; and if the promiſe be real, it can imply no leſs, and it needs not imply any more, than a ſufficient proviſion for our ſpiritual needs; and if that proviſion be not effectual in the event no body is to be blamed for it but our ſelves.

The belief therefore of this Article of Revealed Religion, That God is ready to aſſiſt by his holy Spirit our ſincere endeavours to pleaſe him, is a Motive of great force to perſuade us to the practice of Religion and Virtue; both becauſe the Promiſe of God's Spirit made to us is ſufficient to encourage us againſt all our fears of the difficulties of Religion, and our own weakneſs to overcome them; and likewiſe becauſe it cannot but ſhew us what great aggravation our ſins muſt receive, if we continue in them, becauſe thereby we reſiſt, and *do deſpight unto the ſpirit of grace.*

4. The laſt Principle of Revealed Religion fundamental to a holy Life, is that which is mentioned in the Text, *viz. That God is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*: This point of belief is not knowable, but by Divine Revelation, becauſe it depends on the will and pleaſure of God, whether he will reward our diligent ſeeking of him, or no; for if it were diſcoverable by natural reaſon (as it is not) that God would certainly pardon our Sins upon Repentance, that he would accept of our ſincere endeavours of obedience, that he would by his Spirit aſſiſt our endeavours to pleaſe him; If all this could be concluded from the general notion of Divine Goodneſs, yet Natural Reaſon could not give us any other confidence about the effects of that pardon, and our ſincere endeavours to pleaſe God, which are excited and aſſiſted by the Holy Spirit; I ſay the higheſt confidence we could arrive unto about the good effects of theſe things, with regard to our ſelves, could amount reaſonably to no more than this, That hereupon we ſhould be exempted and releaſed from that puniſhment which is due unto our ſins. For that God ſhould pardon Sinners, and that he ſhould preſcribe unto them ſuch excellent and uſeful Laws, as ſhould tend to their advantage in this Life, and which ſhould recompence the obedience of them with a preſent reward, and thereupon ſhould remit the penalty due

to

to ſin; this muſt needs argue as great goodneſs in God, as any Sinner could with reaſon or modeſty expect the manifeſtation of towards himſelf; but that he ſhould over and above requite our imperfect, if ſincere obedience, with free and ample rewards in the Life to come; that thoſe rewards ſhould be the higheſt and fulleſt, which our natures are capable of; that the continuance of them ſhould be as long as our Beings; that they ſhould be no leſs than immortal glory and happineſs, than an Eternal Crown of Righteouſneſs, than Life Everlaſting, than the Society and Fellowſhip of Angels, than the glorious and happy imployments of *Spirits made perfect*, than the ſight and fruition of God for ever; this is ſuch abundant benignity and good-will towards Sinners, that it can flow from nothing but ſelf-moving goodneſs, free grace, and unſought kindneſs and benevolence! This could never be known by us, but by God Almighty's Revelation of his purpoſe and intention ſo to do, if we would labour to pleaſe him in all things: This with modeſty could never be expected by us, if the declared Promiſe of God thus to deal with us had not given us confidence to believe it, and made it our Duty ſo to do. That we might therefore want no motive and encouragement to the practice of Religion and Virtue; He who by his Son Jeſus Chriſt calleth us to repentance promiſing

promiſing pardon thereupon, and acceptance and aſſiſtance, hath moreover by the ſame Meſſenger, who hath declared to us *the things of God*, his ſecret and hidden purpoſes of Mercy and Goodneſs towards Sinners; by him I ſay, he hath aſſured us, that the *righteous ſhall go into life eternal*, into a ſtate of immortal glory and happineſs reſerved for them in the Heavens.

This alſo, after all the reſt, is a pregnant and ſtrong motive to the practice of Religion and Virtue; ſince as the reſt ſhew the poſſibility thereof, ſo this ſatisfieth us of the great advantage that will accrue to us thereby, ſince God himſelf will be our rewarder, if we diligently ſeek him. If indeed we had no reaſon to believe, that it would make for our advantage to accept of God's pardon, and to ſtudy to pleaſe him in all things for the future, the preſent Pleaſures and Profits of *Sin* would captivate the minds of men, and leave us leſs reaſon to wonder at the wickedneſs of the World; but ſince the Bountiful and Righteous God hath bid an everlaſting immenſe reward for our poor, and to him unprofitable, but to our ſelves moſt beneficial *Services*; what can be ſaid in our excuſe, if we undervalue ſo magnificent and free a Gift, ſuch rich Grace and Bounty? If this cannot prevail with us to do thoſe things which are ſo reaſonable in themſelves, that a truly good man finds there is little

little need of any other temptation to do them, what ſhame will it be to us if we prefer a Moment before Eternity, and thoſe Advantages we ſee (but which we know will periſh in a little time) before thoſe that will never end, which indeed we do not ſee, but which we believe, and doubt as little of, as if we ſaw them; if we chuſe the *pleaſures of ſin*, which are *but for a ſeaſon* (and thoſe unworthy to be choſen by us, if there were no danger in them) before thoſe pleaſures which remain for us *at God's right hand for evermore.*

The

The Fourth Sermon.

St. MATTH. XI. 28.

Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.

NO kind of grief ſits ſo heavy upon the mind of man, as that which is made by the guilt of ſin, and a juſt fear of puniſhment. And becauſe our Lord in this promiſe of reſt, could not mean to exclude thoſe that labour under the greateſt weight, but rather to invite them above all others; I ſhall therefore at this time conſider, what that Reſt is which he promiſeth to guilty minds; perſuading my ſelf, that as no Argument can be more profitable, ſo none will be more welcome and grateful to all that deſire to be ſaved.

As for thoſe who are ſo bewitcht with the pleaſures of Sin, that they feel not the ſtings of it; who drown the cries of their Conſcience in the noiſe of laughter and madneſs; theſe, as long as they are able to make this miſerable ſhift, are not in a condition to deſire other relief,

lief, nor do they care where it is to be had. But they who apprehend how *fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God*, and that their ſins have made them liable to his Juſtice, they indeed are prepared to obey the Call of Jeſus, and to try if he will perform what he promiſes.

And this is the great Prerogative of the Goſpel, that it alone can pacify the Conſcience, and give eaſe to a mind that labours under the weighty care of being reconciled to the offended Majeſty of God: It gives that ſatisfaction, I mean, which in the end will not deceive. And no other is to be valued. For what am I the better for a falſe aſſurance that all is well, which perhaps will vaniſh to morrow, and then leave me under an amazing diſappointment; which the longer it laſts, makes my danger the greater; and if it laſts to the end of my life, hath all along hindred me from uſing the true means of ſafety? What is this better than a pleaſant dream that holds a man faſt aſleep, while the fire is raging in his Houſe, and there is none to wake him till the flames have cut off every way by which he might eſcape? Therefore when our Lord promiſeth that we ſhall *find reſt unto our ſouls*, he does undoubtedly mean, that repoſe of mind, thoſe comforts and joys that will not betray us in the end. And this is not the leaſt commendation of that *Reſt* which he gives, that it is well grounded,

grounded, that our Souls ſhall be ſtaid upon Principles of Truth, and ſuch as we may ſafely rely upon.

Secondly, The *Reſt* which he promiſes, is compleat and full, and in that reſpect alſo is fit to quiet all thoſe cares and fears that vex the minds of miſerable Sinners. For he has promiſed the forgiveneſs of all our ſins, and given us aſſurance of God's particular favour and protection; nay, and of eternal life and glory in another ſtate, when this life once vaniſheth away. He hath told us, that his Death was a Sacrifice for the expiation of our ſins; He hath required us to be once *baptiſed into his Name for the Remiſſion of Sins*; and to repeat the Commemoration of his Death, and our aſſurance of his ſecond Coming, to give us life and glory by repeating the Communion of his Body and Bloud, *and ſhewing forth his death till he come.* The Doctrine which he revealed, and the Authority which he delivered to his Church, is all a Miniſtry of Reconciliation and Forgiveneſs: And we have reaſon to take his word for all this, becauſe he was by mighty proofs demonſtrated to be the Son of God. Now thus far all things are as we would have them; and nothing as yet appears, but that we may diſcharge every unquiet thought in the Arms of Jeſus.

But in the third place, let us alſo conſider the Condition required on our part for the

obtaining of this *reſt*. And this truly ſeems to be very eaſy, ſince no more is required, then *coming to Jeſus* for it. *Come unto me all ye*, &c. For whatever is meant by this Condition, we might hope that it is no hard thing which is expreſt by ſo eaſy a word; and that we need not fear to go to the bottom of its meaning. Elſewhere our Saviour ſaith, *I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me, ſhall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, ſhall never thirſt*. So that *to come to Chriſt*, is *to believe in him*, and therefore to be perſuaded of the truth of his promiſes; which muſt needs be a gentle Condition, becauſe there is ſo much reaſon why we ſhould believe them; and we can have no prejudice againſt them. And I doubt moſt men would be glad to reſt here, without travelling any farther: And ſo without queſtion they might, if it were not for this one thing, that in the Doctrine of our Saviour there are not only gracious Promiſes, but holy Precepts alſo; and that ſo great a ſtreſs is laid upon keeping them, that if we do not, we are but where we were before; *our ſins remains, and the wrath of God abideth on us*. For, ſays our Saviour, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven*. Now if we are to believe him in this too, then coming to Chriſt muſt of neceſſity ſignify

nify more than bare believing, even doing his will alſo; which in the following Verſes is expreſt by *learning of him*, and *taking his yoke upon us*. And here it is that we begin to fall in our opinion of the Grace of the Goſpel, and our Lord's Invitation, becauſe he ſeems to take away with one word, what he promiſes with another. On the one hand he offers reſt, on the other he requires labour. But yet, he that is Truth hath ſaid, that if we will come unto him, we ſhall *find reſt*; and withal, that we have no reaſon to be diſcouraged with the Condition: *Learn of me*, ſaith he, *for I am meek and lowly in heart*; *i. e.* be not afraid to ſubmit to my Rules, for I do not impoſe them in pride, or for my own ſake, but in Charity for yours. *Take my yoke upon you, for it is eaſy, and my burthen is light.* And now we are got thus far, we may with this encouragement venture to the end, and dare to look upon every circumſtance, which ſeems to make our duty grievous.

There are but two things of this kind, and they are the perfection of that duty which the Chriſtian Law requires, and the penalty of diſobedience.

1. The perfection of the Rule; which requires a more exceeding Righteouſneſs than either the Law of *Moſes*, or the Law of Nature. And this is one reaſon why the

Chriſtian Baptiſm is the Sacrament of Regeneration, whether to *Jews* or *Gentiles*: Becauſe they muſt become *new men*, and as it were *born again*, by living up to thoſe Divine Principles, and holy Rules, which are peculiar to the Chriſtian Doctrine; by practiſing that piety, and purity, and charity in all their converſation, which ſeems to be more than enough for the happineſs of ſingle perſons, or of Societies, in this World; but which is neceſſary for an everlaſting happineſs in the life to come.

And here are theſe cauſes of complaint.

1. That there is a ſevere reſtraint laid upon our Natural Appetites and Inclinations, which often carry us as violently to thoſe Satisfactions which the Law of Chriſt forbids, as to thoſe which it allows. There is in every man by nature the love, either of pleaſure, or greatneſs, or revenge, *&c.* and this Inclination for the moſt part ſtifned by cuſtom, ſo that he cannot be a Chriſtian without ſelf-denial, and putting himſelf to pain. And the duty of this kind may be ſo grievous, that as Jeſus himſelf hath deſcribed it, it may be like *cutting off a right hand, and pulling out a right eye.*

2. His Law hath made no allowance for the prevailing Opinions and Cuſtoms of the World. In common account, to forgive one injury, is to be expoſed to another; to refuſe

refuſe a Challenge, is to be mark'd for a Coward; to uſe plain dealing, is the way to die a Beggar; and to neglect ſeveral opportunities of gain or pleaſure, though for Conſcience ſake, is to go for a Fool. But though it is a grievous thing to lie under contempt, yet the Doctrine of Chriſt, without conſideration of this hard caſe, has tied us up to contrary Rules, and expreſly required us *not to be conformed to this world.*

3. We muſt guard our ſelves againſt innumerable temptations to the ſins of Luſt, Covetouſneſs, Envy, Ambition, and the like inordinate Affections, to which a Chriſtian muſt by no means conſent. The very opportunities of doing ill, are in ſome caſes hard to be refuſed; and moreover, every ſin hath its proper incentives, which beſet us in all places. And theſe are ſo buſy and importunate, that ſome think it impoſſible to be religious without retiring from the converſation of the World. But what reſt can there be in perpetual circumſpection, and ſtanding upon our guard? And yet Jeſus himſelf thought this neceſſary for us; *Watch and pray*, ſaith he, *that ye enter not into temptation.*

4. The Law of Chriſt preſcribes to the Thoughts and Affections, as well as to the overt Action. He that does not defile his Neighbour's Bed, may be an *adulterer in his heart*: And he that *hates his brother, is a*

murtherer. If it be hard to forbear the action, what pains muſt be taken to conquer the Deſire, to make it an obedient Slave, and not ſuffer it ſo much as to diſpute? And yet this is the caſe, neither body nor mind, neither deed nor thought is exempted from the obligation of this terrible Law; but we muſt *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit.*

5. It is not eaſy to ſuffer; yet if need were, we muſt take up the Croſs, and be always in mind prepared to endure reproach, the loſs of Goods, yea, and of life it ſelf, for righteouſneſs ſake. And the Scripture, ſpeaking of this, does acknowledge, that *no chaſtiſement for the preſent is joyous, but grievous:* So that in giving up our names to Chriſt, we ſeem to commit our ſelves to a Sea of troubles, inſtead of making to a Haven of reſt. *He that will be my diſciple,* ſaith Jeſus, *let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me.*

This is enough to ſhew the ſtrictneſs of the Rule, and the perfection of Virtue and Piety which the Goſpel requires; but that which makes all more grievous, is the ſecond cauſe of Complaint.

2. The penalty of Diſobedience; For this is no leſs than excluſion from the Kingdom of Heaven, and a more intolerable Sentence at the day of Judgment, than thoſe ſhall receive that never heard the Doctrine of Chriſt.

And *the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation.* And our Saviour hath plainly told us, by what Rule the Good and the Evil ſhall be judged; *The words that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge you at the laſt day.*

And now that we have heard theſe things, we may be exceedingly amazed, as our Lord's firſt Diſciples were, when they heard the like and ſay, *Who then can be ſaved?* or at leaſt, where is the truth of his Promiſe? For the condition of his Promiſe is ſo hard, and the conſequence ſo terrible, if we fail of the condition, that the extream danger, and the great uncertainty, ſeems to create a new trouble, not well conſiſtent with the promiſed *reſt. He is* indeed *true and faithful that hath promiſed*; But whilſt my Soul is troubled, how can I believe that 'tis at reſt? How therefore ſhall we bring theſe things together? The truth is, nothing has more exerciſed the wits of men, than to find out expedients for this purpoſe. And for my own part, I have that experience of Human Frailty on the one ſide, and that deſire to be ſaved on the other, that I never lend my ear more willingly, than to him that ſhews me an eaſy way to Salvation. And I am ſure he attaques my Affections to ſo much

advantage, that I can have no prejudice againſt his way; and nothing but evident want of truth could make me afraid to truſt it.

Some have ſaid, That Chriſt himſelf hath fulfilled all righteouſneſs in our ſtead; and that upon our faith his righteouſneſs is imputed to us for juſtification. This, I confeſs, would cut the knot which we would fain unty; for if this be true, the Goſpel does not only releaſe me from puniſhment, but from duty too. But where has our Lord, or his Apoſtles, ſaid any thing to this purpoſe? Indeed he has promiſed to ſave me from God's angry Juſtice, and that becauſe he was a Sacrifice for Sin offered in my ſtead. But I find that he has impoſed upon me the keeping of his Commandments, as a condition of that Salvation; and therefore I conclude, that he did not perform them in my ſtead too. Nor can I conceive how the holineſs of Chriſt ſhould be made an argument in the Scripture to follow his Example, if it may be improved into a good reaſon why we need not follow it. So that the Merit of Chriſt will not ſave me the labour of becoming a new man; and if that will not, I am ſure no other Merit can. And theſe men not willing to truſt their own Invention, do at laſt confeſs the plain truth of the Scriptures, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God.* And they ſay farther, that 'tis not only hard, but impoſſible for a man left to that freedom which belongs to

his

his Will, to become regenerate. But then what comfort does this perſuaſion leave? Why, they tell us, that Regeneration and Holineſs ſhall be wrought in our hearts by an Almighty operation of the Holy Spirit, ſuch as that whereby God will at laſt raiſe us from the dead. Now I confeſs that nothing can be more eaſy, than to become a good man this way, becauſe under the diſpenſation of irreſiſtible Grace 'tis impoſſible to be otherwiſe. And I am not ſo vain as to refuſe ſo great a bleſſing, if it were in my power to refuſe it. But what if the Scripture hath no promiſe of ſuch Grace? Nay, what if it had, unleſs I knew how to obtain it? or that I was one of a thouſand, and could not miſs it? What if I muſt be left to the common way of watching and praying, and working out my Salvation! And what if all this will be to as little purpoſe, as if I had done nothing at all? Is this the *reſt* that Jeſus hath promiſed we ſhall find to our Souls?

Let us therefore try another expedient; what may be done by ſevere faſting and penance. Will the puniſhing of my Body ſatisfy for the ſin of my Soul? This I think would almoſt do the buſineſs; becauſe 'tis a greater pain to deny a craving Luſt, to ſtop a growing Paſſion, and to reſiſt a ſtrong temptation to wicked Pleaſure, or unjuſt Gain, or deſired Revenge, than to go through a reaſonable courſe of outward mortification: But

But can these things compensate for the omission of necessary duty, or satisfy for the commission of known sin, when under a more imperfect Law God refused harder things than these? *Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* No; *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord*, &c. Bodily Austerities, no doubt, are pleasing to God, and profitable for our Souls, when they are intended to express a just indignation at our selves for having sinned; when to break the wicked custom, they are imposed as penalties and revenges to be inflicted as soon as we have committed any wicked Action; when they are added to the inward trouble of the mind, to make us weary of sinning; and us'd to starve and mortify the evil Appetite. For such reasons as these 'tis necessary to *keep the body in subjection*. But if *bodily exercise profiteth nothing*, unless it be profitable *unto godliness*, and helpeth to make the Soul the better, we are still driven back to that hard point, which we would fain lose the sight of, That without a new heart, and a new life, there is no hope of God's pardon.

I shall try but one refuge more, which indeed gives a fair prospect of relief; and that is, what comfort may be had from the *power of the keys* wherewith Christ intrusted his Church, when he said, *Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose sins ye retain,*

retain, they are retained. Now this aſſures me, that when the Church received me by Baptiſm into her Communion, ſhe gave me a right to remiſſion of ſins; and that if ſhe deprives me of it by excommunication, ſhe can by abſolution reſtore me to it. And therefore I will never break the Peace of the Church by Schiſm, nor loſe it by contempt of her Cenſures. But then I doubt the Church cannot forgive ſins more effectually than God does; who is thus repreſented to forgive, in the Parable of the Lord that *forgave his ſervant ten thouſand talents*: He forgave him indeed, and yet he required the Debt afterward upon his unmercifulneſs to his Fellow-ſervant, which evidently ſhews that the Pardon was but conditional. *So likewiſe*, ſaith our Saviour, *ſhall your heavenly Father do unto you.* And the Church cannot do more than God does, who himſelf requires Conditions; and therefore has not given to man the power of diſpenſing abſolute Pardons, unleſs we can think, that to ratify the word of a man, he has obliged himſelf to diſannul his own. And becauſe he has reſerved to himſelf the final Judgment of all, whoſe ſins are either remitted or retained in this World by the Authority of the Church; therefore the Kingdom of God, that is, the Church, is compared to a Field where *the tares and the wheat grow together*, the time not being yet come for an exact ſeparation. For theſe Reaſons

ſons all are forced to confeſs, that the peace of the Church does then only enſure the favour of God, when the Key does not err. But what if my Conſcience tells me, the Key doth err; and that whilſt I do not forfeit the Churches Peace by ſcandalous Crimes, I do yet depart from God by hidden Iniquities? Can the erring Key open to me the Gate of Everlaſting Life? I would fain believe, that the bringing of theſe ſecret ſins to light, and purpoſing to offend no more, would help at laſt; and that a Death-bed Repentance could by the power of the Keys be made effectual to Salvation. But, O Bleſſed Jeſus! how can I believe that thy moſt holy Doctrine ſhould be but a Rule whereby to confeſs ſin, and to purpoſe againſt it, inſtead of a Rule obliging me to forſake it!

To conclude this matter; If we leave that one path of Obedience, we may try a thouſand By-ways; but the Truth, which cannot be corrupted, will ſend us back again to that plain truth of our Saviour, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*; which like the flaming Sword that turns every way, keeps the way of the Tree of Life againſt all ungodly and unrighteous men.

If therefore that *Reſt* which our Lord promiſeth, is not to be had out of the way of Obedience, it remains that we muſt find it in that way, if we find it at all. Let us therefore try for better ſucceſs here, than we

we have yet had. Let us ſee, whether the exactneſs of Rules, and the indiſpenſableneſs of Obedience, muſt needs make us uneaſy under the Diſcipline of Chriſtianity; or rather, if the Grace of the Goſpel doth not mitigate all the ſeverity of its Laws, without making any of them void. Now the firſt mitigation I ſhall conſider, is this.

1. That the Goſpel leaves room for repentance of known and wilful Sins committed after Baptiſm; a moſt remarkable inſtance of which Grace we have in the Diſcipline of the Church as it ſtood in the Apoſtle's days. For when the Inceſtuous *Corinthian* was brought to Repentance, St. *Paul* commanded the Church to forgive and comfort him, leſt he ſhould be ſwallowed up with overmuch ſorrow. And ſurely as God forgives thoſe open Scandals for which the Penitent was cut off from the Body of Chriſt; ſo upon repentance he will forgive thoſe ſecret Offences too, which can make *no* forfeiture of Church-Communion. If after ſin there were no hope of pardon upon new obedience, it would indeed be very grievous to be obliged to obey ſo perfect a Law under ſo bad a Penalty. For then if a temptation ſhould once prevail, we were irrecoverably loſt; I ſay, if we have violated the Law of Chriſt heretofore, we are in a deſperate caſe, though we ſhould never do

the like again. But bleſſed be God, it is not thus with us. Though we have heinouſly fail'd of our duty, yet we may with good comfort repair our paſt neglects by future diligence; being aſſured, that if we do, God will not impute to us our former ſins; ſo that the Law of Chriſt was not intended for a ſnare, nor made perfect, that occaſion might be taken againſt us, but that we at length might be perfect too. And for ever bleſſed be his Name for the Grace of accepting Repentance, that Grace which gives the worſt of men ſome good hope, if they will lay hold upon it in time, and without which the beſt of men could have no hope at all.

2. The utmoſt perfection which the Goſpel requires, is not expected but upon a gradual improvement, and ſuch improvement is by no means grievous. It were intolerably hard indeed, if we were obliged, under penalty of Damnation, to *perfect holineſs* all at once; (which burthen they bring upon themſelves, who leave all to a Death-bed Repentance) if it would not turn to good account, to grow better, to *preſs forward toward the mark of our high calling*; to die unto Sin daily, and live unto Righteouſneſs. But why is God patient, and long-ſuffering toward us? Why does he allow us one year after another, but that we might recover our ſelves by degrees, he in the mean time being ready

ready to pardon us as we repent, and to accept us in the way of growing better? And this is great Grace to every man, but moſt of all to him who is *accuſtomed to do evil*, and cannot preſently learn to do well, *i. e.* to do well univerſally. For he may now begin his Repentance well, though he cannot yet compleat it: He may forbear the outward ſin, though he cannot yet repreſs the inordinacy of his Deſires; he may avoid the temptation which he cannot reſiſt; he may pray for the Grace of God, and read the Holy Scriptures; he may attend to good Exhortations, and make good Reſolutions, and think of them afterwards, and deſire the Counſels and Prayers of good men. He may do many things in Religion when 'tis not in his power to do all; and by doing thoſe which at preſent are in his power, he is in the way of enabling himſelf to do thoſe which at preſent are not. Now that is no grievous task which will eaſily go off by degrees, and which we may therefore make eaſy, by an early beginning, and allowing our ſelves time for it.

3. As we grow more exact in obedience to Chriſt, ſo our uneaſineſs under it, wears away. and at length it ends in the moſt pure and perfect delight that the Soul of man is capable of. Self-denial, and the reſiſting of Temptations, will at firſt be painful, eſpecially to thoſe that have been uſed to live without rule and reſtraint. And there might be ſome colour

for

for complaint, if this would always laſt: But the more earneſtly we apply our minds to the duties of Repentance, and a Holy Life, the firſt diſcouragements will vaniſh the faſter. But more particulary.

1. It is not ſo hard to begin well, as our Prejudice and want of experience repreſent it. For we begin with the help of mighty Arguments, ſuch as cannot be equalled by the Temptations of the World. Should not the hope of Heaven have a ſtrong influence upon a man endued with free-will, eſpecially when join'd with the fear of Hell? Is there any difficulty in being concerned for Everlaſting Salvation, in being afraid of Everlaſting Burnings? And yet where this concern is, it cannot be hard to lay a good foundation of a new life. It is not grievous to love him above all things, who is our Creator and Saviour; and therefore why ſhould it be thought a grievous thing, for his ſake, eſpecially when 'tis for our own too, to break off our ſins by repentance? Beſides, God hath not left us to grapple with our unruly Affections by the mere force of our own reaſoning upon motives, and the uſe of our natural liberty; but has moreover promiſed the aſſiſtance of Supernatural Grace and Bleſſing to thoſe that ask him. And is it hard to have recourſe to the Fountain of our Beings, the God of Grace and Mercy, and with

with earneſt Prayers at leaſt twice a day, to beſeech him that he would endue us with wiſdom and patience, and ſafely guide us through all the diſcouragements of this World, the importunities of fleſhly deſire, and the Temptations of the Devil, till we find every good work habitual and delightful: And this one thing, *viz.* fervent Prayer, makes a wonderful alteration in the mind, and brings a kind of new Soul into a man. Again, No ſooner is Repentance well begun, but a man begins to look up to Heaven without his wonted conſternation; he is no longer in a ſtrait between the dread of God's Juſtice on the one hand, and a prevailing love of his Sins on the other, nor conſtrained to put God out of all his thoughts, or to be in pain under them. Finally, now that he has conquered his firſt Averſions, he is ſure of a compleat Victory, if he purſues his end, which is a comfort that the wiſe of this World have not in their way. How many are they that covet wealth and greatneſs with the ſame greedineſs, labour for it with the ſame induſtry, contrive for it with the ſame wit, and wait for it with the ſame patience; but this with very different ſucceſs; one of them thrives, and another decays as faſt; and for one that comes to riches and honour, perhaps ten find the greateſt part of their care rewarded with nothing but experience of this world's uncertainty.

Nay in these things Chance is often seen to do more than Wisdom; and the wary and diligent man is disappointed, while the lazy and foolish prosper. But whoever made it his design and business to be saved, and in order to that to be good, who found it too hard for him? These and many other Arguments and invitations a man shall meet with at his first setting out to run the race of a Christian Life, which wonderfully break the difficulty of his undertaking. But,

2. When he has arrived to a spirit and habit of Obedience, then is the Promise of Christ perfectly made good to him, that he shall find rest to his Soul. Then he can with full advantage compare that sweet freedom he enjoys from the tyranny of lust and passion, with that servitude in which he once was to inordinate desire, to foolish hope, and to those sower affections of malice, envy, and revengefulness, which are to the Soul what the Stone and Strangury, and the most tormenting Diseases are to the Body. Then he can compare the ease of going by one constant Rule of Piety and Honesty in all his ways, with the labour of serving divers and contrary Lusts, and with the distraction and uncertainty of being still put upon new expedients to serve a present turn. Then he can compare the Comforts of a good Conscience, with that grief of being told by his own mind that he had done ill, which alone is more painful than

than all the hardſhips of Religion. But he needs not gather how well it is with him at preſent, by reflecting upon his former reſtleſs State: For thoſe very heights of Chriſtianity, which at firſt troubled him moſt of all, he now finds to be the cauſes of the greateſt ſatisfaction and delight. That Command of forgiving and loving Enemies, which once made him almoſt deſpair of being a good Chriſtian, now that he has ſubdued his Paſſions to it, gives him a world of eaſe, and makes him feel a tranquility of mind which another man's malice cannot diſturb. Thus the purity of his deſires and thoughts, and the altering of his natural temper from what it was, makes thoſe good works to be performed with freedom and pleaſure, which were once tedious and unnatural: And yet he was at firſt ſtrangely diſcouraged at that obligation which the Law of Chriſt lays upon our Inclinations and Thoughts. Nay, that once frightful condition of taking up the Croſs, now that he is come to a reſolution upon it, has fixt his tranquility, and left him free to enjoy all the reaſonable pleaſures of proſperity, without vain fears of what may happen hereafter, which is a Peace that the World can neither give, nor take away. So that the hardeſt Duties will give us the moſt perfect Reſt; which plainly ſhews, that they are not ſo terrible as they ſeem at a diſtance; for if they were, we

ſhould be ſure to find it, when we make a through trial of them; but then we find that they are a rejoycing to the heart.

But when all is done, what is dry reaſoning upon theſe things, to a lively experience of them? And how can the Reſentments of a good man's Soul be underſtood, without feeling them in our ſelves? They are Comforts too great for common expreſſion: Nay the very beſt of holy men, and thoſe with the advantage of Inſpiration, have been hard put to it to deſcribe them. *Oh how I love thy law!* ſaith the *Pſalmiſt, it is my meditation all the day. I have longed for thy ſalvation, O Lord, and thy law is my delight. Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing ſhall offend them. My ſoul hath kept thy teſtimonies, and I love them exceedingly.* Thus alſo St. *Paul* repreſents himſelf, and his Brethren, under all the trials of their patience, to be *as ſorrowful, yet always rejoycing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all things.* What are theſe expreſſions, but the overflowing of a pure and ſincere Joy, which words cannot reach; and of which we can have no juſt conception, *till we taſt and ſee how gracious God is; till we come to Chriſt, and learn of him, and take his yoke upon our ſelves*: Then ſhall we *find reſt to our ſouls.*

Little thanks therefore do they deſerve from Jeſus, or from his Diſciples, who pretend to ſhew

ſhew an eaſier way to Heaven than that of Repentance, and New Obedience. What need of invention and wit to avoid thoſe Commandments, in the keeping of which *there is ſo great reward*; that labour in which there is ſo much reſt, unleſs by *Reſt* we mean *Lazineſs*? Why ſhould we at once cheat our ſelves of that true *Reſt* which Chriſt promiſeth under his Yoke, and of that *Reſt* too *which remaineth for the people of God* in a better Life? And there is no coming to the later but by the former. We may poſſibly deceive our ſelves for a time, yet that day and hour is coming that will undeceive us all, as our Lord hath forewarned us, and that in ſuch plain and pregnant words, that if we well mark them, they will not ſuffer us to be deluded with falſe hopes. They are thoſe words wherewith he concluded his Sermon on the Mount; and with them I ſhall conclude alſo. *Many ſhall ſay unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name, and in thy name caſt out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you; Depart from me ye that work iniquity. Therefore whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wiſe man, who built his houſe upon a rock, and the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that houſe, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And*

every one that heareth theſe ſayings of mine and doth them not (but expecteth to be ſaved another way) *ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh man, who built his houſe upon the ſand: And the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that houſe, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof.*

Thus have I ſhewn you the *old path, and the good way*; That was my part; And now it is yours and mine to *walk in it.* And then *we ſhall find reſt for our ſouls.*

Which God grant for the ſake of Jeſus, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all honour, praiſe and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

The

The Fifth Sermon.

A

SERMON

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

ROM. VIII. 28.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

THis ſaying was at firſt delivered for the Comfort of thoſe Chriſtians under Perſecution, to whom St. *Paul* adminiſters much Conſolation in the latter part of this Chapter: But it is very proper to be inſiſted upon at any time, for the encouragement of good men, and to perſwade all others. For in ſo uncertain a World as this, what ſhould we deſire more than to be certain of this one

thing. That *all things ſhall work together for good*, which as the Text ſays, ſhall happen *to them that love God*. Now to faſten thoſe good thoughts upon our minds which this Text does very readily ſuggeſt; I will diſtinctly conſider theſe ſeveral particulars contained in them. For,

1. The univerſality of the expreſſion is obſervable, *viz.* that *All* things ſhall work together for good. And,

2. The manner by which good comes from them, which is expreſſed by their *working together* for good.

3. What that *good* is for which all things work together.

4. Who they are for whoſe good all things work, *viz.* they *that love God*. And,

5. The certain aſſurance we have of all this, and that is implied in the firſt words, *we know; we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*

Which things cannot be ſpoken of ſo diſtinctly, but that they will ſometimes run into one another; but I ſhall have a particular regard to each Conſideration, under theſe ſeveral Heads. And,

1. Let us conſider the univerſality of the expreſſion, *All things* ſhall work together for good. Now by *all things* we may underſtand,

1. All

1. All that happens in this life, whether it be good or evil; which interpretation will be ſufficiently juſtified by what the Apoſtle ſays in the two former Verſes; *Likewiſe alſo the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought, but the ſpirit it ſelf maketh interceſſion for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; for he that ſearcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit*, &c. The meaning of which is this, That when we are under any Affliction, we know not whether it be beſt for us to be delivered, or to continue as we are; but the Spirit of God diſpoſeth our minds to ſubmit to his pleaſure and wiſdom; and whatever our particular deſires are, to wiſh in the general what God ſees is beſt for us, which we cannot utter in particular, becauſe we are ignorant what that is. But God knows it, and withal he knows our hearts, and ſees that by his Spirit we are wholly diſpoſed to ſubmit to his choice. And then he adds, *And we know that all things*, &c. *i. e.* though we do not know in particular what God will chuſe for us, yet we know, that whatever our Lot ſhall be in this life, it ſhall be for the beſt: So that by *all things*, we are led to underſtand all thoſe things of which *we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought*; and thus they take in the proſperous as well as the adverſe part of our lives. Now becauſe there are dangerous temptations

tions in proſperity, which do often prove hurtful to men in their Souls and Bodies too; it is therefore no ſmall privilege of a good man, that his Piety and ſincere Love to God, does not only keep him from the harm which may come of a plentiful enjoyment of worldly Bleſſings, but alſo make them truly ſerviceable to him, and to work for his good; and that God will continue him in ſuch a ſtate, as long as he ſees it is beſt for him.

But then,

2. Although this meaning is by no means to be excluded, yet the principal ſenſe ſeems to be this, That even all thoſe things which we are naturally afraid of, and would willingly eſcape, that is, all the evils of this mortal life, ſhall work together for good. This, I ſay, is the principal ſenſe, becauſe it was the Apoſtle's Deſign in this Chapter to ſupport the minds of the Chriſtians to whom he wrote, under the troubles they endured for the ſake of Chriſt. And as this meaning was chiefly intended, ſo it repreſents a truth which would be moſt deſired. For (1.) Relief is needful only againſt cauſes of Fear and Sorrow, ſuch as the Evils of this World are, and here 'tis given. The beſt men commonly have a mixture of good and evil for their portion in this life. But we think that the proſperous part will take care of it ſelf; and that it is the other only that calls for aſſiſtance and comfort. And therefore all will

 grant,

grant, that this Divine Truth gives ſecurity where there is moſt need of ſecurity; and adminiſters eaſe and help in every caſe that requires it. And then (2.) becauſe we lie open to innumerable Accidents, and the kinds of misfortune to which we are liable, are not to be counted particularly; the univerſality of the expreſſion makes our comfort and ſecurity equal to our dangers. For the number of them cannot diſmay us, where without exception to any one, proviſion is made againſt *All*; where the remedy will not fail, not only if any one, but if every one of them ſhould happen to which we are liable. And (3.) Becauſe all things are not alike grievous to every man, becauſe all men have not the ſame tenderneſs in every part of their Natures; but one thing affects this man with more grief and ſmart, and another is more ſenſibly wounded by other Adverſities; therefore the conſolation afforded by this Truth is ſtill more deſirable, inaſmuch as it brings remedy in this caſe alſo; for where *all* Evils are ſaid, the worſt is not excepted. And laſtly, Becauſe the affirmation is general, it is an equal antidote againſt the fear of Evil, and againſt the bitterneſs of Sorrow when it happens; it ſuffers not our preſent Enjoyments to be killed with the fear of the future, and it ſupplies us with hope and patience when Evil is preſent. So that if we conſider the univerſality of the Expreſſion, it is a very

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rich Promiſe which is ſuppoſed in the Text: ſince as to the occaſions upon which a good Chriſtian may need comfort, there is nothing wanting in it to ſatisfy him; for *all things* ſhall work together for his good.

2. We are likewiſe to conſider the manner whereby theſe Evils of life produces good to them that love God; which, as I take it, is intimated in that expreſſion of *working together*. *All things ſhall work together for good*, &c. For here are theſe two particulars to be obſerved. (1.) That there is a natural tendency in theſe Evils themſelves to procure us ſome good. (2.) That nevertheleſs there muſt be a concurrence of other Cauſes to effect it.

1. That they themſelves do in their own nature tend to do us good; and for this reaſon they are ſaid to work for good, not only that good is wrought out from them, but that they work it; for indeed they are in themſelves not improper and unfit means for this end. And therefore when God afflicts any good man, we may be ſure he delights not in the pain which he ſuffers, no nor does he afflict him merely to ſhew his Soveraignty and Dominion over him; nay not always ſo much as to ſhew how by his Power and Wiſdom, he can make things produce Effects contrary to their own nature; but becauſe he does in his Wiſdom ſee that the Evils he ſends

ſends will naturally lead towards a good end. And we know it by undeniable experience, that an uninterrupted proſperity in this life, is that which the weakneſs of our Nature could bear as little, as the other extreme; and it would be a great deal worſe for us than that mixture of one and the other, which is the common portion of Mankind. Now therefore, becauſe in chuſing our Condition, God has ſtill a regard to that which is for our good; every true Servant of God under diſtreſs, may not only conclude in general, that it is good for him to be afflicted, but likewiſe in particular, that that affliction which he is under, is more for his good, than another would have been; that it is the proper means which God hath choſen for his improvement, and the procuring of thoſe effects which are moſt needful for him: Therefore alſo, if more burthens than one are upon him at the ſame time, or if one follows upon the neck of another, that none of them could be well ſpared: but that they work together, one for one good end, another for another, all jointly for his true happineſs. And if this be true with reference to ſingle perſons, it muſt needs be ſo with reſpect to the Church, or to any Body of Chriſtians, adhering to the true faith and obedience of the Goſpel; ſince the Providence of God is more watchful for a common, than a particular Intereſt; and ſince this truth

truth was mentioned by the Apoſtle in behalf of Believers that felt the ſame troubles. So that we are as to all Evils of this World, to conſider God not as arbitrarily diſpoſing of our Concerns, but rather as wiſely chuſing fit means for our happineſs. And this conſideration will ſerve to repel all murmuring thoughts againſt his Providence, and to diſpoſe us not only to contentation, but even to thankfulneſs, under the Adverſities of life; and that becauſe it ſeems they are ſo far from being ill meant by Providence towards us, that they are choſen by God as proper means working for our good; not only Adverſities in general, but thoſe which happen in particular, more than others would have done. But then,

2. There muſt be a concurrence of other cauſes to make them effectual for our good. I cannot certainly tell whether that be meant by that phraſe of *working together*, for I do not know but the Apoſtle might mean no more in this place, than that all things that happen to God's Servants, ſhall work together, that is, one with another promote that which is beſt for them in the end. But I am ſure the thing is true, that other cauſes muſt be preſent to work together with theſe; and becauſe the Apoſtle knew that they would be ſuppoſed, therefore they are fit to be mentioned.

And

And (1.) The Grace of God which is neceſſary to all good effects which his Providence deſigns to work in and for us; that will not be wanting. For if any thing that is grievous befals us by his Providence, he will not deny us that inward aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit towards a good uſe of it, which is needful, becauſe the outward means of doing us good, is not of our own chuſing, but his. And this is one reaſonable account of that ſaying of *David*, *In very faithfulneſs thou haſt afflicted me.* For God hath promiſed to be good and gracious to him; And this Promiſe was ſo made good by thoſe Troubles that befel him, and the ſupports he had under them, and by that Grace of God which diſpoſed him to make a good uſe of them, that he could not but acknowledge the Truth and Fidelity of God upon this account, as much as for all the Glories and Proſperities that ever fell to his ſhare. But then (2.) Something is required of us to convert all Evils that do or may befal us, into ſuch advantages as may be made of them. They indeed give us the opportunity, and God give us the ability, but then we muſt perform our duty. They work as Occaſions and Means, God works as the Supream Director and Mover, but it is our part to work as the immediate Inſtruments of our own good, and that by more Conſideration, and more earneſt Prayer; and herein lies the tendency

dency of Worldly Croſſes to do us good, that they do of themſelves diſpoſe a good man to thoſe things more than ordinarily. And it is in this ſenſe that we are to underſtand the ſaying of the Wiſe-man; *Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the ſadneſs of the countenance the heart is made better.* That is to ſay, (1.) It is diſpoſed to conſider more ſeriouſly; for it takes away all that levity and arineſs of thought which in ſome degree does almoſt neceſſarily attend an unmixed proſperity; and it does alſo ſuggeſt many profitable thoughts which ſeldom come to our minds at another time. This very Divine Truth, *That all things work together*, &c. is not ſo often thought of when we need not the ſupport of it, as when we do; nor the Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the Divine Providence, nor the rich Promiſe of being raiſed up to everlaſting Life. There muſt be the conſideration of ſuch things to make all things work for our good; otherwiſe this Text were ſet here in vain; nor need we to have known the truth it holds forth to us, if without laying it, and other things of the ſame nature to heart, they would work good for us by themſelves. (2.) Fervent Prayers are requiſite for the ſame end; for otherwiſe the Apoſtle needed not have told us in the foregoing Verſe; *Likewiſe alſo the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it ſelf ma-*

keth interceſſion for us with groans that cannot be uttered. In which words, as I have already intimated, the Apoſtle encouraged his Chriſtians to earneſt Prayer; aſſuring them, That in their Circumſtances, the Holy Spirit of God would guide them to pray for things that were good for them; though in all their Prayers for temporal things, to ſubmit their Deſires intirely to the Will and good diſpoſal of the Almighty, who would accordingly anſwer them, by doing what was beſt for them. Now frequent and earneſt Prayer does wonderfully diſpoſe the mind of a good man to a ſtrong dependance upon God, and brings back great Conſolations and Strength from him, and confirms it in a ſtedfaſt and unmoveable reſolution of keeping a good Conſcience, and looking for that Mercy of God unto Eternal Life. It is by ſuch Actions of our own, that all things work together for good; and all Evils of life do themſelves work for it, by diſpoſing us to theſe things *i. e.* to Conſideration and Devotion: to conſider the Soveraignty, Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, the Vanity of this World, our infinite concerns in a better life, more ſeriouſly and cloſely than we have done; and to pray to God for all needful things more affectionately and heartily. Now where ſuch Diſpoſitions as theſe are followed, there all the good fruits of worldly Evils will grow plentifully, which, what they are, comes

next to be conſidered; in the mean time we have gone thus far, That there is nothing wanting in them, as they are occaſions and opportunities of doing good for our ſelves; and that through the Grace of God, and our own uſing them aright, and cheriſhing thoſe good inclinations and diſpoſitions which they beget in our minds, they will actually produce the good ends for which they are ſent.

3. Let us now conſider what that *good* is for which it is ſaid that all things ſhall work together; what kind of *good* it is, and what is the *degree* of it. If we conſider the kind, it may be truly ſaid in the firſt place, that ſometimes it is of the ſame kind with the evil, and that God ſends the temporal evil to bring about a temporal good. Thus *Joſeph* who was deſigned by Providence to be ſo great a Man in *Egypt*, when it was to be the Granary of that part of the World, was firſt to be ſold like a Slave, and afterwards to endure a vile Impriſonment; every new Miſfortune all the while proving a ſtep to his greatneſs. Even wiſe men do ſeldom chuſe for themſelves all the ways of doing well in the World; the event is, to ſhew which are the beſt means, becauſe our welfare here depends more upon God's Providence than our own wiſdom. How often is it ſeen, that a man's beſt chance that ever he had, aroſe from a diſappointment? And this

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after thoſe methods of his own deſigning which he built confidently upon, turned to no account? But then all the Adverſities of good men will not admit of this anſwer; nor does this way of ſhewing, that all things turn to good for them that love God, if it were generally true, it does not, I ſay, ſuit ſo well with the Deſign and Spirit of the Goſpel, which does not raiſe worldly Expectations, but takes off our Affections from this World, and propounds to us the Rewards of a better for our Contentation, Patience and Self-denial. And therefore we muſt in the ſecond place lay our ſtreſs upon this, That thoſe evils of this World, which have no recompence from it, and thoſe that have, work together for good of another kind, and a far better kind, to thoſe that love God; and that is their *S*piritual and Eternal good. For the making out of which, I need to inſiſt upon no other ground but this, That there is no Chriſtian Virtue which is not this way plainly improvable to greater perfection.

For (1.) there are ſome religious qualities which an abſolute proſperity ſeems to have little uſe of, and therefore for want of exerciſe they ſeldom grow under it to great perfection. Of this ſort we may reckon, Truſt in God, Dependance upon his Providence, and Reſignation to his Will; but moſt aſſuredly, Contentation, Patience and

Ingenuity in Religion, in oppoſition to ſerving God out of a Mercenary hope of this World's Bleſſings from him, are for the moſt part but little uſed, and cannot be clearly proved till it comes to the trial.

But (2.) whatever Virtues they are that ſhine forth in a proſperous condition, they are capable of being wrought to a higher degree of perfection under the contrary. For inſtance, a good man will not fail in thankfulneſs to God, when he is ſurrounded with all manner of good things. But when evil happens to him he will be much more thankful, he will more carefully obſerve what God has left him, and make more grateful acknowledgments of his bounty for a part, than when he had all together. Nay, he wiſely conſiders, that Afflictions are the Tokens of God's Paternal Love to him, and is therefore thankful for that goodneſs from whence they came. Humility towards God and Man is another Ornament of a proſperous ſtate, but it is by no means laid aſide under the troubles of Life, which oblige us more effectually to acknowledge the Sovereign Power and unſearchable Wiſdom of God, and with *Job* to *humble* our ſelves before him *in duſt and aſhes*; which alſo becauſe they level us with thoſe that were once below us, do therefore make us ſee how vain a thing it is to glory in worldly things, and to bear up our ſelves upon the Opinion

Opinion of thoſe outward advantages we have above others. Moreover, do we learn Charity and Compaſſion towards our Brethren, by that ability which God gives us to be helpful to them that need? I add alſo, that we learn it yet more perfectly by feeling our ſelves that which in others proves us to be Merciful and Compaſſionate towards them. Nay, this is one reaſon the Apoſtle gives why our Saviour himſelf has ſo great a Compaſſion for us; *We have not an high-prieſt who cannot be touched with a ſenſe of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are.* Finally, if the moderation of our Deſires and Temperance in the uſe of this World's good things, and a quiet expectation of Death may be gained and demonſtrated in the fulneſs of proſperity, the declining and abatement of it will not hinder but rather promote theſe diſpoſitions; for by Patience we are yet more diſentangled from worldly deſires, and our ſenſual Appetites are moderated, when they are not ſo plentifully ſerved; and all the Croſſes of this Life make us expect Death with more Tranquility and Aſſurance. Now ſince the evil of this Life does not only raiſe theſe Virtues, which are very little excited by a confluence of all pleaſures, but moreover does equally improve all the reſt; then it is a ſpiritual good which they work for them that love God; and conſequently the encreaſe of their Eter-

nal Reward. For it is not to the Great and the Fortunate, but to the Meek, the Humble and Charitable, and to thoſe that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs, that the Kingdom of Heaven is promiſed. Therefore ſaith the Apoſtle, *God chaſtneth us for the preſent, that we might be partakers of his holineſs; now no chaſtning for the preſent is joyous but grievous, nevertheleſs afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs unto them which are exerciſed thereby.* And thus much for the *kind* of good which outward evils may produce; let us conſider the *degree* of it. Now this I ſay, that if all evils work together for good, then I know the degree of that good which is wrought, to be greater than the degree of that evil by which it is wrought; for if the good were leſs than the evil, then it had been better that I had not been afflicted; nay, if it were but juſt equal, I had then been troubled only to be where I was before; and therefore the good muſt be greater. Wherefore alſo if the evil be very great, the good will be proportionably greater, and by conſequence the greateſt evil that can befal a good man, will through the Grace of God and his own Care, redound to a good greater than it ſelf. All which may be true, and yet ſuch a man may not always be ſenſible of it. For (1.) the change which is made in a good Chriſtian's mind for the better, cannot well be

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ſo ſenſible as the alteration which is made in his outward Correction, by any conſiderable coſt or pain. Indeed when adverſity proves an occaſion of turning every one from a plain and groſs way of wickedneſs, ſo great an alteration muſt needs be felt, but the difference between the degrees of Piety and Wiſdom, is not ſo ſenſible as the difference between a ſtate of Virtue on the one hand, and of Vice on the other. And therefore if a righteous man behaves himſelf well under any Chaſtiſement, he may conclude himſelf better for it; and that the benefit is greater than the evil, though he does not feel them both alike, eſpecially ſince the improvement of the mind, though in it ſelf not very great, is yet a greater good than the pain that cauſed it is an evil. A great bodily affliction is not loſt, if it has taught us a little more wiſdom. If the *inward man be renewed day by day*, we are well recompenced, though *the outward man decays faſter.* (2.) God does ſometimes ſend evil to prevent our falling into ſin, and then we cannot be ſo ſenſible what we gain by it, becauſe we were not aware of that danger we were running into, if God had not applied a timely prevention, who conſults our ſafety, not always by ſtaying till a ſudden remedy is needful, but by keeping off an approaching miſchief which he forſees, whilſt we have no apprehenſion of it. And

certainly thoſe things work for our good, which keep us from backſliding and growing worſe. Upon theſe two accounts the benefit is as real, though not ſo ſenſible as the ſharpneſs of the means; and ſo we may reſt, without the trouble of any objection, upon the truth of God's word, That upon our prayer and ſubmiſſion, no ill ever has or ſhall befal us in this World, without redounding to a greater good. I have thus ſpoken concerning the univerſality of the expreſſion, *all things*; concerning the *manner* whereby good is produced by them; and what is the *kind* and *degree* of that good for which they work *together*. I proceed,

4. To conſider the qualification requir'd for the receiving of the benefit. They ſhall work together for good *to them that love God*; *i. e.* to all righteous and godly perſons, who are ſaid in the very next words to be *called according to purpoſe*, that is, who anſwer their call to Chriſtianity by a ſtedfaſt purpoſe of Heart to live according to it, and if need be, to dye for it. Now when 'tis ſaid, that all things ſhall work together for the good of ſuch, the meaning is not, that no evil ſhall work for the good of any other. For the Chaſtiſements of this Life may bring a wicked man to repentance, but it is more certain abundantly that they work for good to the righteous; inaſmuch as they deſire to be made more conformable to the Image of God;

God; they do already value the riches of the mind above outward advantages; they are already diſpoſed to receive all good inſtruction, and upon all viciſſitudes to turn themſelves to God by Prayers and Thankſgivings; they have already lived by Faith, and are therefore prepared to ſeek Conſolations from his Word more diligently, when any preſſing need requires; to them it is leſs hard to obey in ſuffering, having been already accuſtomed to do the Will of God; they have had experience of his goodneſs, and do love him above all things, and therefore are always diſpoſed to take every thing in good part from him, believing in his Wiſdom and Goodneſs. Finally, they have a Title to the ſpecial Grace and Favour of God already, and therefore cannot fail of more abundant ſupplies upon all needful occaſions. Upon all theſe accounts, which it is ſufficient but juſt to mention, it is evident that a ſincere Lover of God hath ſo many advantages towards making the beſt uſe of all accidents of Life, that we may be aſſured they will work together for his good. Which brings me to the laſt Point, and that not of the leaſt conſideration; *viz.*

5. That we *know* they will thus work; for this is the Comfort which brings all the reſt home to us, that we are well aſſured thus it will be. If when the evil were preſent, the remedy were abſent, it were no remedy

remedy to us, and it would be abſent from us, if we were ignorant of it. As for the evils of this Life in general, we know it is a vain thing to expect a total exemption from them; it was therefore neceſſary for the relief of our minds to know likewiſe that they ſhall work for good to us. As for thoſe in particular which we are naturally moſt afraid of, we know not certainly whether they will all befall us or not; but under this uncertainty we are again relieved, by knowing that if they do, they ſhall turn to our benefit. But how do we know it? We know it many ways. (1.) From the goodneſs of God, who does not delight in the grief of any of his Creatures, much leſs of thoſe that love him. He would not therefore ſend affliction, were it not to be converted into a means of greater good. The troubles and pains of this Life are in themſelves evil, and therefore all that they can be good for, is to be a means of ſome good or other, for they can never become good in themſelves, and for their own ſakes; and therefore God would not inflict them, if they were not good in their conſequences. (2.) We know it farther, becauſe we are ſure our Lord Jeſus has made a compleat ſatisfaction to the Juſtice of God for the Sins of thoſe that are truly penitent; ſo compleat, that upon the account of ſatisfying God's Juſtice, they are neither liable to Temporal

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nor Eternal Puniſhments. But yet God ſometimes puniſhes good men in this World, he often viſits them with affliction, ſince therefore his Juſtice is already ſatisfied, it muſt be reſolved into his Wiſe Mercy and Kindneſs towards them, that he viſits them with his Rod, and ſuffers them not to go without ſome Chaſtiſements. (3.) We know it, becauſe good men are ſo diſpoſed, that it is almoſt natural for them to reap great advantages by all the Changes and Chances of this Life; it is no more than what the ſtate of their minds, and the courſe of their Actions has promiſed all along, as we obſerved before. But, (4) Above all we know it, becauſe God hath ſaid it; he hath ſaid it, and therefore to be ſure he will do all that is requiſite on his part to make it good; he hath ſaid it in this very place, and in innumerable places of holy Scripture, as many as contain promiſes of his Preſence, will and Favour to his people in all conditions of Life. Now to ſum up all; Seeing *all evils* of this World, *none* excepted, ſhall work for our good; ſeeing they do of themſelves contribute towards it, by offering to us very *conſiderable opportunities* of benefitting our ſelves; ſeeing the good for which they work is *greater* than the pain we endure; and that the greater the evils are, the good will therefore be greater; ſeeing a good man is ſo diſpoſed as to uſe

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thoſe opportunities for his own advantage, which they yield; ſeeing he is farther *enabled* by the Spirit of God ſo to do; finally, ſince we know all this, and are as certain of it as the *goodneſs of God*, as the *meritorious Death and Paſſion of our Saviour*, as the *reaſonableneſs of the thing*, and as the *promiſe of God* can make us; then it is plain that in this Divine ſaying there is nothing wanting to encourage and comfort all thoſe that truly love God, and do his Will; or to perſuade all others to do ſo too, which I propoſed to ſhew at firſt.

And now Brethren, what remains, but that knowing theſe things, we be ſo happy and ſo wiſe as to do accordingly; and therefore that we be throughly perſuaded to ſecure all the good things to our ſelves we have been conſidering, either by keeping always a good Conſcience, or by unfeigned Repentance. This indeed were a good application, and this ought to be the concluſion of the whole matter. But time would fail me to inſiſt upon even this Exhortation as the caſe would bear; which I ſhall therefore reſerve to the next opportunity, intending then alſo to purſue ſome other Points; *viz.*

How this Doctrine doth conſiſt with Prayers and Endeavours againſt Adverſity, and how far it is a Rule to ſuch Prayers, *&c.*

How it ought to influence the judgment we make of the happy or wretched eſtate of man in this life.

How

How true and profitable a point of Wiſdom it is to reckon upon the uncertainties of this World.

Why a righteous man only can do it without ſollicitude, and loſing the comfort of preſent Enjoyments. And laſtly,

How ſeaſonably a vehement Exhortaion to Piety may be grounded upon all theſe Conſiderations.

The

The Sixth Sermon.

Rom. VIII. 28.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

THE remaining Points are now to be purſued, the firſt whereof was this.

1. How this Doctrine doth conſiſt with Prayers and Endeavours againſt Adverſity, and how far it is a Rule to ſuch Prayers and Endeavours. 1. How it conſiſts with them. For if outward pains and troubles work for a good much greater than the evil that belongs to them, and if we have ſo great an aſſurance of this as we pretend; why does the Church pray againſt all Adverſity? Why do religious men avoid it as well as they can, no leſs than the reſt of the World? It ſhould ſeem more agreeable to their faith in God in general, and to their belief of this Principle in particular, to force miſeries upon themſelves, or at leaſt to deſire God to ſend them. But they, as well

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as others, provide for their health, and ſend for the Phyſician when they are ſick; for their livelihood, and uſe the Law to ſecure or recover their Rights; for their welfare every way, and in all their diſtreſſes take counſel, and uſe means for their relief; depending all along upon God for ſucceſs by continual prayers. So that none ſeem to believe in good earneſt what we pretend to know, unleſs perhaps ſomething of this may be ſeen in thoſe who affect poverty, renounce all propriety in worldly Goods, impair their Health by a ſparing and ill Diet, and at certain times whip their own Bodies: And yet we are apt to think there is more noiſe than truth in theſe appearances; we are ſure there is ſuperſtition in the practice, and we ſuſpect hypocriſy in the pretence; and that men do theſe things more to amuſe the World, than to benefit themſelves. Since therefore we know that evil works for a greater good, why do we avoid evil? I anſwer,

1. When *all things* are ſaid to work together for good, though Evils are principally meant, becauſe the deſign of the Apoſtle was to adminiſter comfort under them; yet, as I ſhewed at firſt, the *good things* of this life are by no means excluded. And therefore the good that comes of evil can be no reaſon of running into adverſity, or pulling it upon our ſelves, unleſs good could come to us no other way, which is contrary to what the

the Text affirms, which ſays, *All things ſhall work together for good.*

2. One principal Reaſon why all things work together for good, is this, Becauſe it is God that out of all things chuſes that which he ſees is the beſt for us. Now the avoiding of Adverſity is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with this belief, that on the other hand, to bring it upon our ſelves, would deſtroy a main reaſon of it, *viz.* That it is of God's chuſing, and not our own. If by any wicked way I compaſs a worldly end, the good thing is not properly of God's giving. If by my own folly and wilfulneſs I fall into miſery, the evil is not properly of God's ſending; in both caſes I have been my own Carver, and therefore have no reaſon to expect good from either. I cannot hope for Gods's bleſſing upon the one, or the other, ſince I did not commit the iſſue of my Affairs to his Providence, and Wiſdom, but was reſolved to be my own Chuſer. So that the Operation and Grace of God being one indiſpenſable cauſe of the profit which good men make of the evils of this life; the good that comes of them can be no reaſon why they ſhould expoſe themſelves voluntarily to Evils, but 'tis a very good reaſon why they ſhould not; and that becauſe we cannot expect God's Bleſſing, where we lean to our own Wiſdom altogether, and will not ſubmit our affairs to the Wiſdom of God.

But now if it be ſaid, That by this Arguing a man that contrives for his own welfare and proſperity, cannot hope that it will work for his good, when he has compaſſed it, becauſe he chuſes for himſelf as abſolutely, as if he pulled Calamities upon his own head: 'Tis eaſily anſwered, That he is not his own chuſer in that caſe, as he would be in this; for he that brings evil upon himſelf, or neglects what is neceſſary to prevent it, does abſolutely chuſe it; but ſo does not he chuſe the good things of this life, that contrives for them within the bounds of Honeſty and Religion, for he ſtill leaves the iſſue to Providence. This can only be ſaid of them that by ways of Injuſtice, or any kind of ſin, graſp at worldly Proſperity; it is of theſe truly ſaid, that *they will be rich*, and great, and make their Fortunes here; that they truſt not in God, but lean to their own Wills; that they refer nothing to his Wiſdom, but will diſpoſe abſolutely of themſelves. And no leſs true would this be of a man, who on the other ſide ſhould abandon himſelf to Adverſity. And, as I ſaid before in both caſes, God's Wiſdom being no way acknowledged, and ſubmitted to, his Grace cannot be expected.

3. To both theſe Conſiderations, let us add that of the natural averſion we find in our ſelves to pain and want, and other evils of the Body; and it will be very evident, that

the Doctrine of the Text infers no obligation to inflict them voluntarily upon our ſelves, but is very well conſiſtent with our Prayers and endeavours to avoid them. As to theſe Evils, it could never be required that we ſhould not fear them when we are in danger, nor feel them when they are preſent, nor deſire to deliver our ſelves from them; becauſe theſe are the neceſſary reſults of our Nature. All that could be expected, was, that we ſhould fear them moderately in proportion to what they are, and bear them patiently; admitting thoſe comforts under them, which they do not exclude, and removing them by all ſuch means as will not bring greater miſchiefs upon us.

But let no man think, that becauſe Religion does not pretend to extinguiſh the ſenſe of bodily Good and Evil, and that becauſe 'tis a natural Senſe, therefore it ſhould not require the mortification of Luſt, Covetouſneſs, Envy, and ſuch inordinate Appetites, becauſe they are natural too; and we find that we go down hill, when we give way to them. For there is a vaſt difference in the caſe; for theſe wretched Inclinations do not grow from any neceſſary ingredient in our Natures, they do not ariſe from any thing that belongs to our Eſſence; they are no part of our original Conſtitution; but they are the Diſeaſes and Corruptions of our Nature, which we have contracted ſince

we came out of the hands of God. But now hunger and thirſt, and the pain of heat or cold, and the ſenſe of bodily Evils, is rooted in the very Nature of man, as it was created firſt of all, and can no more be ſeparated from it, than we can be divided from our ſelves. And therefore there is good reaſon why we ſhould be allowed to yield in this caſe, tho not in the other. If the vicious Inclinations we ſpake of before, were truly natural, all men would undoubtedly be libidinous or covetous, or envious and cruel, *&c.* but all men are not ſo; ſome have crucified theſe Affections and Luſts of the Fleſh, and are temperate, chaſt, juſt and merciful. But hunger, and thirſt, and pain, all men feel alike; which ſhews that this ſenſe, and conſequently the fear of theſe things, and the deſire of eaſe and relief, are truly natural, and belong to the purity and integrity of thoſe Natures in which God hath made us. And therefore thoſe Philoſophers that would teach men to live without fear, and without pain, let what outward things happen to them that could happen, were mere Romantick Pretenders, and did by no means take the right way to guide Mankind to happineſs. True Religion wiſely conſiders humane Nature, and allows it to be afraid of, and confeſſes that it cannot but feel adverſity, and forbids us not to decline it, if prudently we can, if honeſtly we may. But if it is not to be avoided, it

it repreſents to us ſo many Advantages that may be made of it, adminiſters ſo many Comforts under it, as may keep the bitterneſs of grief from our hearts, and make us patient and contented, nay and thankful to God, for chuſing for us that wholſome, tho bitter Medicine, which tho we are loth to take, yet we dare not refuſe when it comes from his hand. And what inconſiſtence is there, between keeping off thoſe Evils by our Prayers and Endeavours, which 'tis impoſſible for humane Nature not to recoil from; and believing, that when they cannot be avoided, God will turn them to a greater good, becauſe it plainly appears to be his will and pleaſure that we ſhould undergo them? Thus our Bleſſed Saviour, who was never contrary to himſelf, on the one hand bad his Diſciples *rejoyce, and be exceeding glad, when they were perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake*, becauſe *great was their reward in heaven*; and yet on the other hand; when *they were perſecuted in one city*, he bad them *flee to another*. Nay, though he himſelf, *for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame*; he yet nevertheleſs teſtified the reluctance of Humane Nature in that Prayer, *Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me*, which yet was no ways inconſiſtent with his ſubmiſſion, but made it more worthy of praiſe. *Nevertheleſs, not my will, but thy will be done.* Which puts me in mind of the

next Point, *viz.* That although this Doctrine does not reprove, yet 'tis a Rule to our Prayers and Endeavours againſt all the evils of this Life.

For inſtance, 1. That our Prayers be with ſubmiſſion to the pleaſure of God, as well becauſe he is infinitely wiſer than we are, as becauſe he is infinitely above us. And the more particular our deſires are, for the moſt part they ought to be offered with more expreſs reſervations to God's ſupream and wiſe diſpoſal of us. For it is in worldly things, that that holds true, *We know not what to pray for as we ought*; and therefore we ſhould add folly to our ignorance, to deſire paſſionately this or that, when we know not what we deſire, and whether it would work good or evil to us, if we had it. And this is a Point ſo diſcernable, that the wiſe Heathens ſaw it. What elſe could *Juvenal* mean in ſaying, *Charior eſt, &c?* Man is dearer to God than to himſelf; we, led on by a blind Paſſion, deſire things, and have them not, becauſe God ſees how they would prove; but we ſee no more than what is preſent.

2. The aſſurance we have that all things will work together for good, is a cloſe reſtraint from the uſe of all unlawful methods in keeping off the evils of life. *To do evil that good may come*, is in it ſelf manifeſtly unlawful; but this is a great aggravation of it,

it, and takes away all excuſe, that we know *evil will work for good* to them that love God. When we proſecute our worldly deſigns with Heat and Paſſion, it happens not ſeldom that we ſtrive againſt God's purpoſe to do us a greater good by a diſappointment; but this may paſs for an excuſable ignorance, ſo long as we keep our ſelves within the compaſs of honeſt and lawful endeavours. But when once we tranſgreſs thoſe bounds, we make our ſelves guilty of inexcuſable ſin, inaſmuch as we break the Commandments of God, and wound our own Conſcience, either to obtain that which may be for our hurt, or to prevent that which may be for our good. In a word, we may upon other accounts be ſatisfied, that to do evil for a good end is damnable; but he that knows all things ſhall work together for good to them that love God, if He himſelf loves God, can be under no *temptation* to do evil that good may come.

3. And laſtly, this belief is a proper means of ſeparating all our thoughts for this life, from anxiety and vexation. I have already ſaid, 'tis a vain thing to ſuppoſe that it ſhould reduce us to a perfect indifference about the good and evil of this World; but it may and ought to temper our cares, and bring us to reaſonable moderation about it; for by the ſame reaſon that evil muſt affect us with grief or fear; the good which it

will yield, may on the other hand ſupply us with hope and joy, and the conſolation will be ſtronger than the affliction, becauſe the good will be greater than the evil.

And in the mean time our care and thoughtfulneſs ſhould be the leſs, becauſe God himſelf careth for us, and hath undertaken for the event. Thus much concerning the conſiſtency of the Apoſtles Doctrine, with Endeavours and Prayers againſt the evils of life, and the Rules which it preſcribes to them.

2. Let us conſider how it ought to influence the judgment we make of the happy or wretched eſtate of men in this Life. And this is that which we ought to learn from hence, Not to judge of this caſe by the outward appearance only, or by the preſent ſtate of mens circumſtances in this World. As to this point, whether it be well or ill with a man, it is not by any means ſo conſiderable what his outward Condition is, as what uſe he makes of it now, and how it will end hereafter. Take him with all the worldly Proſperities about him, that the heart of man can wiſh; but do not preſently pronounce him bleſſed, nor wiſh thy ſelf as he is. There are other things of greater concern than thoſe that appear, which ought to come under conſideration. Does not his fulneſs lead him to forget God? Do not his Pleaſures carry him away into Intemperance? Does not his great-

greatneſs lift him up with pride? Are not his Affections captivated by this World? Are his Fortunes made to adminiſter to Piety towards God, and Charity to men, or to provide for the Luſts of the Fleſh? And will he be the better or the worſe for them in the end? Theſe are the material Queſtions. No man is to be envied that abuſes good things to his own hurt, and undoes himſelf with proſperity. And certainly he is in the much happier condition, who converts all Adverſities to a good uſe, and grows better within, by being worſe without; who turns himſelf to God more effectually by Repentance and Prayer, upon ever pain or loſs that he ſuſtains; who cleaves faſter to his God for being forſaken by the World; and when all things are unquiet without him, takes the more care to keep all quiet and calm within, and to make his true happineſs faſt and firm to himſelf. Such a man may ſeem unhappy to the eye of the World. But happineſs is a thing that dwells within doors, and does not often ſhew it ſelf abroad; we can ſeldom tell where it lives by outward ſigns. Therefore do not ſeek for it any where, but in God, and in thy own mind: Think not that thou haſt found it, when thou ſeeſt a man encompaſſed with all kinds of outward proſperity. It does not paſs from one man to another with Silver and Gold; it neither goes nor comes with Houſe and Lands; it does not

deſcend with Titles and Inheritances; it does not wait in a retinue of Servants, nor mingle it ſelf with Flatterers; It is not ſerved up at a plentiful Table, nor is it put on with fine Cloaths, no nor kept or loſt with the health of the Body, nor does it always go along with a chearful Countenance. It is no viſible Eſtate, but a ſecret Treaſure; and when thou haſt found all the former things about a man, ſtill thou muſt look into his mind, to know infallibly whether he has gained this, or not; and ſo much reaſon, and no more, thou haſt to believe all is well with him, as thou haſt to take him for a good man, one who loves God, and is beloved by him. So that we are not to judge of our whole eſtate here in this World by outward things, becauſe all the true happineſs of men, which they have in preſent poſſeſſion, lies in the mind; and if they have it not there, they have it not at all. Much leſs are we to meaſure it by outward appearance, when we conſider that the *greateſt* part of it is in reverſion: When it is once ſeen to what account the good or the evil of this life turns at laſt, how a man has improved himſelf in Patience, in Charity, in Faith, in dependance upon God, and in dependance upon the World; then we can more certainly pronounce whether it has been well or ill with him all along. And all will underſtand it clearly, when 'tis once ſeen who ſhall appear

pear with Chriſt in glory. In the mean time, they are in good Circumſtances who do not only in all Conditions repoſe themſelves upon God, and a good Conſcience, but to whom all things that befal them are working for a good that is yet unſeen, but will certainly be manifeſted in due time. Eſpecially ſince it is a good that will ſhortly begin, and never end. For *the things that are ſeen are temporal, but the things that are not ſeen are eternal.* But then,

3. If all things ſhall work together for good to them that love God, then may a good man, without any abatement of his preſent Comfort, reckon upon all the uncertainties and Viciſſitudes of this World. For he knows that future Ills will as certainly work for his good, as if they were preſent; and though they are ſuppoſed, and as yet uncertain, yet the good is certain upon ſuppoſition that the evils happen. And it is no ſmall advantage to be able to count upon adverſities without diſturbance; for this is one way to reap all the comfort of preſent enjoyments, without ſuffering them to do us any hurt. We ſhall not ſtake our contentment and ſatisfaction upon them, when we conſider how uncertain they are; nor let our Affections cling too much to them, becauſe they may ſlip from us before we are aware. We ſhall uſe them with ſobriety, and charity, and thankfulneſs, not knowing but in a little

little time this may be all the comfort we ſhall take in them. But moſt men do not care to think of the future any other way, but in that of Self-flattery. *To morrow ſhall be as to day, and much more abundantly.* They *put away the evil day far from them*, and cannot endure to conſider it, till 'tis upon them, and 'tis impoſſible to put it off any longer. And then how can comfort find a way into their Hearts, whoſe beloved enjoyments are ſuddenly gone, and nothing is left but the guilty remembrance of having abuſed them to Folly and Luſt? I know not what difference there may be upon other accounts between the ſatisfaction which the good things of this life yield to a wiſe man on the one ſide, and thoſe pleaſures which fools reap from them on the other. But there is this difference ſufficiently to the good man's advantage, that the comfort he finds in them is conſiſtent with Principles of Truth; he does not conceal the Truth from himſelf; he does not go on in a vain preſumption, as if theſe things would always laſt, but uſes them as things that periſh in the uſing, and loves them as things that may be loſt; and without truſting them, does from time to time take all the reliefs and pleaſures that a reaſonable man can deſire from them. In the mean time, the uncertainty of theſe things does not ſit uneaſy upon his ſpirit, becauſe he knows that while they laſt, they

ſhall

ſhall work for his good; and when they fail, that ſhall do ſo too. But on the other hand, how extravagantly ſoever a licentious man pleaſes himſelf, and indulges his Appetites in his proſperity, he is all the while beholden to ignorance, and miſtake, and fooliſh preſumption, for his preſent Enjoyments. Tell him of the fickleneſs of his Fortunes, and the changeableneſs of the World in its beſt eſtate; that he is well to day, but may be as ill to morrow; and if he believes this, it ſtrikes him into a dulneſs, and damps his ſpirits, and ſpoils all his gaiety. If he believes it not, then 'tis a plain caſe, that he lives in the Fool's Paradiſe, and makes a ſhift to be merry, by keeping himſelf in ignorance, and taking care not to think. Beloved, if a man has nothing but this World to truſt to, he has great reaſon to be melancholy. And 'tis a very ill ſign, if we cannot endure to conſider that it will fail us one time or other, but had rather live on without preſaging the leaſt alteration in our Affairs, till it happens unavoidably. And thus many Perſons dream out their days, without ſo much as reflecting ſeriouſly upon the moſt common, and yet moſt concerning them in the World, *viz.* that they muſt die. And therefore when they are almoſt drawing to the laſt gaſp, the Phyſician muſt in Charity give them ſtill ſome hopes of life, leſt they ſhould die with the fear of death; a plain

plain ſign that they never counted upon their Mortality to any purpoſe, but laid the whole weight of their welfare upon this life, and the pleaſures of it, without conſidering how weak a foundation they built upon all along. It becomes us as we are men, and much more as we are Chriſtians, to take this life as it is, and all the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of it as they are, and to affect them no farther. And next to the conſideration of that Eternal ſtate in the life to come, in compariſon to which, this is but a ſhadow; there is no belief that makes a ſerious Contemplation of the uncertainty of all things here below more eaſy and quiet, than that of this truth, *That all things ſhall work together for good to them that love God.* For ſurely that belief which ſupports any man under any evil when 'tis preſent, will not let him feel any diſturbance at all from the poſſibility of it when 'tis not preſent.

4. Let me therefore in the laſt place conclude all with an earneſt Exhortation to Piety, and the keeping of God's Commandments; and that upon the preſent motive, that then the comfort of this Truth belongs to us, that *all things ſhall work together for our good.* If we were to ſtudy what to wiſh, and might have it for the wiſhing, I do not know what we had more reaſon to deſire for the quieting of our minds, and giving us the trueſt peace and tranquility, than that all

things

things ſhould work together for our good, and that we ſhould know it, and be well aſſured of it. But nothing can be wanting to an abſolute aſſurance of it, but that we love God, and keep his Commandments. If it were left to our choice, whether we would have an aſſured intereſt in this Promiſe, and in that Grace and Providence of God, which will make it good; or whether we ſhould from time to time have the diſpoſal of our own Condition, and be left to our particular Deſires, and be always maſters of them; we ſhould be very fools to truſt our ſelves in our own hands, and to take our ſelves out of the hands of God, even this very folly would ſhew how unfit we are to be our own Carvers; and what fooliſh work ſhould we make, if we were wholly to diſpoſe of our ſelves! We ſhould be ſure to deviſe things to our own hurt, and be always gratifying a preſent Appetite, and ſerving a preſent turn, till we had loſt all rule and government of our Paſſions; we ſhould grow wanton and ſelf-willed, and nothing would be able to pleaſe us, or make us happy, but any thing almoſt to make us miſerable. And in whoſe hands are we moſt ſafe? in our own, who ſhould undo our ſelves even with things that are not in themſelves hurtful; or in God's, who will make things that are not good in themſelves, to work for our good? Can we be better provided for, than to be taken care

of

of by Infinite Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Power? He that made us, knows our Nature better than we do our ſelves, and he loves us more wiſely than we love our ſelves, and he can do infinitely more for us, than we can do for our ſelves; what have we therefore to do, but with intire obedience and ſubmiſſion to put our ſelves under his guidance and protection, and to beſeech him that he would permit us to reſign all our Affairs to the diſpoſal of his Providence, and that he would pleaſe to ſend us that which he ſees is moſt expedient for us? If my whole Fortune in the World depended upon an Affair too intricate for my skill, and far beyond my power to manage; ſurely nothing could be more welcome than the Aſſiſtance of ſuch a Friend upon whoſe Fidelity I could rely with the greateſt confidence, and of whoſe Wiſdom I could make no doubt, if he would undertake it for me. And if he directed me what to do in a plain and eaſy method, and required me to leave the reſt to himſelf, and wholly to rely upon him for the event, certainly I ſhould at once follow his Directions, and eaſe my mind of all farther Cares. Such is the Caſe we are ſpeaking of, with this difference, that to God only we are to pay abſolute Obedience, and in God only we can put an abſolute Confidence. Our great buſineſs is to be happy, and this is a matter beyond our skill and power to effect for our ſelves:

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But God hath undertaken it for us; only he has given us a Rule, a plain Rule, whereby we are to walk, which does not require cunning and ſubtilty, but ſimplicity and honeſty to follow it. For the Reſt, he hath promiſed to bring it about, and to diſpoſe all things for the beſt in order to our good. And therefore why ſhould any doubt remain in our hearts; why ſhould we doubt to commend our ſelves to God, by Prayers and Repentance, and doing his Will? And then why ſhould we doubt whether it will go well with us at laſt? If it were poſſible that any thing ſhould be hid from God, or that his Will ſhould change; if multitude of Cares could diſtract him, or length of buſineſs tire him, or any one paſſage of our lives eſcape him; if his Power could be at a ſtand, or his Goodneſs ceaſe; if he were not *the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever*; then indeed we might ſometimes queſtion, whether thoſe things that happen to us were for the beſt. But becauſe he is God, and not Man, we may believe that all his Providences over us are grounded upon Reaſons of Wiſdom and Goodneſs, though we do not diſcern them in particular; and that they will all contribute to the perfection of our Happineſs, though we do not ſee how at preſent. Only we muſt love him, and ſerve and obey him; we muſt not alienate our ſelves from him by an evil Heart, and wicked Actions; but con-

form our Wills to his Will, and our Converſations to his Laws. It is nothing but want of this that diſables us from caſting our care upon him. *In God there is ſtrong confidence*; but if our confidence in him be not ſtrong, it is not becauſe his Providence, and Wiſdom, and Power, and Truth, will not bear it, but becauſe our Guilt will not bear it, our evil Conſcience, our love of this preſent World, or ſomething or other that eſtrangeth us from God. And 'tis the Character of wicked men, that they *live without God in the world*; not only becauſe they live without reſpect to his Laws, but alſo becauſe they live without any relief or benefit by his promiſes; and becauſe they live in this World without loving and fearing God, they ſuſtain the preſent puniſhment of living in this World without putting their truſt in him, *i. e.* without the greateſt comfort of life, to which the whole World cannot afford the like. Wherefore, Beloved, let us remember *upon whom this bleſſedneſs cometh*, and be careful not to loſe our part in it. To which end we muſt look back upon our paſt ſins to repent of them, and look forward upon the remaining part of our life, with an unalterable Reſolution not to forfeit our Intereſt in the ſpecial Grace and Providence of God, for the obtaining of any worldly Good, or the avoiding of any worldly Evil; which to do, were the greater folly and madneſs, becauſe

cauſe we know that if we love God, and are called according to purpoſe, *i. e.* as I explain'd it, are true to our Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, then all things ſhall work together for our good. Let us, Brethren, lay theſe things to heart; for the more we think of them, the more we ſhall be confirm'd in a hearty belief of them. They will be a direction and a comfort to us as long as we live, nay and they will ſupport us in the hour of death; and then they have done all our work for us, for *the laſt enemy that is to be deſtroyed is death*; and death it ſelf ſhall work the greateſt good of all for us, in delivering of us from this evil body which our Saviour will *change into the likeneſs of his glorious body, according to his wonderful working, whereby he is able to ſubdue all things unto himſelf. Wherefore my beloved, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know your labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.*

The Seventh Sermon.

A

SERMON

Preached at

COURT.

Eccles. III. 15.

That which hath been, is now, and that which is to be, already hath been, and God requireth that which is paſt.

THE former part of the Text, *That which hath been, now is, and that which is to be, hath already been*, is in ſenſe the ſame with *v.* 9. *ch.* 1. *There is no new thing under the Sun*; that is, as the Ages of the World go on, the ſame Events come about again.

The latter part of it. *God requireth that which is past*, ſeems to have this meaning, that God ſtill requireth the ſame behaviour from us, that he hath ever required of thoſe that have been before us.

Which two Conſiderations being intended to promote the general end of the whole Book, *i. e.* to make men *fear God and keep his Commandments*: I intend to illuſtrate both, and to ſhew how uſeful they are for that purpoſe.

Now theſe ſayings are to be underſtood, as many other Moral and Proverbial ſayings are, where what is univerſally affirmed is to be underſtood as to the greater part. The meaning cannot be this, that there is no Diverſity of Events to be ſeen in the ſeveral paſſages of mens lives, or in the ſeveral Ages of the World; for as the wiſe man obſerves in the beginning of this Chapter, *To every thing there is a ſeaſon, and a time to every purpoſe under heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted*, &c. Nor can the meaning be, that nothing happens in one Age of the World, but it hath happened in every Age. For ſometimes God *createth a new thing*. The Son of God was to come in our Nature but *once before the end of the World*. There have been Ages of Miracles, but we have ſeen none for many Ages together. Such rare and extraordinary caſes

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as theſe are not intended; and as to all the reſt, the meaning is this, That if we conſider the diverſity of Events which befal Mankind, and the Viciſſitudes of good and evil which they undergo, theſe varieties are ſtill ſo repeated in the ſeveral Ages of the World, that the difference is not ſo conſiderable as the agreement; in the main they are the ſame, though the circumſtances be diverſe: Juſt as the ſeaſons of the Year are the ſame, in which nevertheleſs there may be great diverſity of Weather; not always the like Sunſhine or Rain, fair or foul Weather, barren or fruitful Seaſons; yet ſtill the ſame Spring, Summer, Winter, and Autum, do return in their courſe.

And as the caſe of all Ages is much alike as to the Events that befal men, ſo 'tis not much different as to the Duties required of them. For in all times from the beginning to the end of the World, the Moral part of Religion is the ſame, *viz.* to fear God, to be Juſt and Charitable to men, and to govern our Paſſions by Reaſon, by the reverence of our Maker, and the expectation of a final account. And God has once for all required ſome Duties by a particular Revelation, by which we are obliged to the end of the World. Nay, and the Circumſtances which make the doing of theſe things more or leſs difficult, are not new, ſince the ſame, or the like, have frequently returned hereto-

fore; and when we are gone, will be repeated again. So that ſtill God requireth that which is paſt.

Now becauſe, as I told you, theſe Conſiderations are of great uſe; that they may have the ſtronger impreſſion, I ſhall try to ſhew, that it muſt needs be ſo; that it cannot be otherwiſe, if we take one thing with another, but that that which hath been ſhould be now, and that which is to be, already ſhould have been.

1. From the beginning of the World to the end of it, they are the ſame things of which the *good* or *evil* of Mankind is compounded. The welfare of the world always did and ever will conſiſt in ſuch things as theſe; In a juſt and wiſe Government; in conſtant obedience to it; in peace and ſecurity; in proſperous undertakings; in having good Parents and good Children, and good Relations; in a good name; in competent maintenance; in liberty and health, and in agreeable converſation. There are no new ſorts of happineſs peculiar to one Age, which are not as deſirable by another; nor any kind of miſery that one has ſuffer'd, but another muſt feel the ſame uneaſineſs and pain under it, when it happens. And therefore becauſe it is the good and the evil that happens to men, which makes up a great part of the Hiſtory of the World, they muſt be in great part the ſame things that are brought

over

over again. Eſpecially ſince for the moſt part one of the contraries is inſeparable from us; we muſt either want, or have enough; live in Health or Sickneſs, in Freedom or Servitude, *&c.*

And therefore when we are in great pain, or ſuffer wrong, when a good Husband or a beloved Child dies, though we complain and lament, as if ſo ſad a caſe never happened before, and perhaps ſay ſo too; yet theſe are but words of Paſſion, for there have been the like complaints before, and the ſame reaſons of complaint too. We are not made in a different Mould, and to a different Senſe from thoſe that have lived in former times; for they were affected with pain and grief as we are, and from the ſame cauſes too. For which reaſon, when Providence either puniſhes or rewards in this life, when it either puniſhes the wicked, and tries the righteous by adverſity, or rewards the righteous, and inſnares the wicked with proſperity; it goes the ſame way to work, either inflicting that which is equally ungrateful to all men, as Peſtilence, Sword, Famine, Diſappointments, Loſſes, and the like; or ſending the contrary things, which are always grateful. So that as to the good or the evil which happens in the ſeveral Ages of the World, *There is no new thing under the ſun, but that which hath been, is now, and that which is to be, hath already been.*

2. All

2. All men have the ſame natural Paſſions and Appetites, which they either govern or not govern as they ought to do, and which according as they are well uſed or not, will perpetually produce the ſame effects of good or evil. The Affections of Envy, Pride, Ambition, Revenge, Covetouſneſs and Voluptuouſneſs, have reigned amongſt evil men in all Ages. And injuſtice ſtill proceeds from the ſame Covetouſneſs or Partiality: *Rebellion at home, and unjuſt Invaſions from abroad*, from the ſame Ambition and Deſire of Rule. Cruelty from the ſame Revengefulneſs, or Fear, or Anger, or Hatred; Luxury from the ſame inordinate Love of Eaſe and Pleaſure; and inſolent contempt of others, from the ſame Pride and over-weaning Conceit of one's ſelf. Theſe Vices have their Root in the ungoverned Paſſions of humane nature, and in the abuſe of man's free will. And therefore ſince God has left Mankind to a natural liberty and power over their own actions, under the diſadvantage of bad inclinations, and with the help only of ſuch grace as may be reſiſted, no wonder that there is ſo great a ſimilitude of Events ſtill returning, becauſe ſo much of the good that happens to us depends upon Wiſdom and Virtue, and ſo many of the evils of this life upon Folly and Vice. It hath always been ſeen, that Juſtice and Faithfulneſs, reverence of God, and good will to Men, Unity and Charity, and

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good Manners, have enabled men to do well for themſelves. But when they degenerate, and their Manners are corrupted, then their Proſperity begins to be undermined. And if they grow from bad to worſe, God will ſuffer them to reap the fruit of their own doings, and all their Sins to ripen into thoſe Miſchiefs which they naturally produce: In which alſo it is not hard to trace the footſteps of a Divine Vengeance. Indeed it ſometimes happeneth, that *the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong; neither yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.* *i. e.* Through the over-ruling Providence of God, things do ſometimes happen otherwiſe than by common Rules, which though it does not fall out ſo ſeldom as to be always new and ſurprizing, yet neither does it happen ſo often, but that the contrary is the ordinary courſe of things; and for the moſt part a Faithful man ſhall be truſted, a Charitable Man ſhall be loved, a Religious and Virtuous Man ſhall be honoured, an honeſt and diligent man ſhall thrive; *the integrity of the upright ſhall guide them, but the perverſeneſs of tranſgreſſors ſhall deſtroy them. The wiſe ſhall inherit glory, but ſhame ſhall be the promotion of fools.* So that not only the good and evil of this life are in all Ages the ſame, but the cauſes of both are the ſame too;

too; that is to ſay, the Virtues and the Vices, the Wiſdom and Folly of Mankind, and the wiſe Providence of God ſuperintending all, and always governing all for the beſt. And therefore *that which hath been is now, and that which is to be, hath already been.*

3. This muſt needs be ſo, becauſe they are but few in compariſon that learn to be wiſe by the Examples and Inſtructions of former Ages. Alas! we do not often take warning by the miſcarriages of others, though we ſaw their courſe and their end with our own eyes. If we take any notice of their Examples at all, it is but to learn how we may play the fool with more diſcretion; to be as bad as they were, and to come off better than they did; and ſo we go on as boldly as thoſe that went juſt before us in the ſame dangerous way, till we are ſurprized by the ſame unhappy end, and all our Experience comes too late to do us any good. But then how much leſs are we inſtructed by the Hiſtories of Ages that are long ſince paſt and gone? And yet it was for our Inſtruction that God *ſpake at* firſt *to the Fathers by the Prophets*, and at laſt to the World *by his Son*. And when he took the Wiſe in their own Craftineſs, when his Judgments were abroad in the World, and he viſited men for their Sins; *Theſe things happened to them for examples, and they are written for our admonition*

nition upon whom the ends of the world are come. But now do we every where ſee that fruit of theſe obſervations which might be expected? How comes it then to paſs, that we ſee ſo little Righteouſneſs and Fidelity, Integrity and Uprightneſs, Unity and Charity; ſo little of the Fear of God, and the practice of Virtue in the World? As much older as the World is, it ſeems not to be much wiſer than it has been; but as one Generation paſſeth away and another cometh; that that comes, begins as if it were the firſt; and learns little or nothing to the purpoſe, by thoſe which are paſt away. Of all which perverſeneſs, the people whom God choſe to himſelf were an inſtance never enough to be admired. When at firſt he *redeemed them from their enemies*, they *believed his words, and ſang his praiſe*; but they *ſoon forgat his works, and tempted God in the deſart*; *they forgat God their Saviour, who had done great things in Egypt*; they committed Idolatry, they murmured and rebelled, and they were plagued for it, and God lifted up his Hand againſt them to overthrow them in the Wilderneſs. But for all this, when their Poſterity came into *Canaan*, they Sacrificed to the Idols there; and then God gave them into the hand of the Heathen; and upon their Repentance *many a time did he deliver them.* But all would not do, they provoked him more and more, till Ten Tribes were quite

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caſt away, and the other Two ſent into Captivity for Seventy years. After this indeed they were cured of Idolatry, but they preſently fell to corrupt the Moral part of Religion, and to make the Temple a Sanctuary for ill Manners. How can we forbear deploring the wretched folly and unteachableneſs of man, and admiring the infinite Patience of God! At length God ſent his Son into the World to bring in the Everlaſting Goſpel, the clear knowledge of God's Will, the certain aſſurance of a life to come, and the Doctrine of the Croſs; to conſtitute a Society of Believers, to unite them by Sacraments, and to eſtabliſh the Faith upon Miracles and Divine Demonſtrations. This diſpenſation did indeed produce mighty Effects, and ſo many Heroical Examples of Virtue and Piety in every one of the three firſt Ages of the Church, that perhaps the whole World for about 4000 years before, was not in all that time able to ſhew an equality to any one of thoſe Ages. But by degrees the Purity and Virtue of the Chriſtian Communion abated; and though the Church has in the worſt times brought forth ſome Sons and Daughters unto God, ſome genuine Children unto our Heavenly Father, yet alas for human Nature! *Chriſtendom* has been a Stage of as groſs Hypocriſy, as ſcandalous Errors, and as great Sins, and Miſeries ariſing from thoſe Sins, as ever any part of

of the Heathen World was. Time wears off the ſenſe of extraordinary things, and we grow to be but indifferently affected with the noble Works that God has done in the days of our Fathers; and by our ſtupidity we conſtrain Providence to awaken us to conſideration by new warnings, and to revive that ſenſe of Duty which is ſo apt to decay while we are let alone.

All which things being conſidered, we are bound to bleſs and praiſe the Infinite Goodneſs of God, who has not left us without a Teſtimony of himſelf, both in the Light of Nature, and the particular Revelations of his Word, and the Footſteps of his continued and unwearied Providence over us. For if notwithſtanding all this, if notwithſtanding plain Inſtructions, convincing Examples, clear Warnings, and undeniable Teſtimonies, Mankind is ſtill ſo apt to forget God, and to run into all miſcarriages; then how inſupportable had the Luſts and Vices of the World been, if there had been no Revelation, no Providence, no Faith, or Religion, no fear of God at all; if he had left Mankind to themſelves, without his checks and reſtraints, his controul and government, undoubtedly the Earth had not been able to bear the violence of its Inhabitants, our Reaſon and Free-will had made us but the more dangerous Brutes to one another, and the Societies of Mankind had been long ſince diſſolved.

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The ſum of what hath been ſaid is this, That good and evil are the ſame in all Ages of the World; that the liberty of humane nature, and the paſſions of humane nature are the ſame too, and therefore the cauſes of good and evil are the ſame, in reſpect of man; That mankind is very apt to forget former inſtructions, and to need the like warnings that their Forefathers had, which therefore God in his Wiſdom and Goodneſs repeats unto them. So that ſince we are of the ſame mould with thoſe that have been before us, and with thoſe that are to come after us, and there is the ſame wiſe providence over all, it follows that the like variety of events muſt ſtill come about again, and *that which hath been, is now, and that which is to be, already hath been.*

Amongſt other good uſes that may be made of ſuch Conſiderations as theſe, this certainly is one, That we ſhould always diſpoſe our ſelves to receive our portion in this World, be it better, or be it worſe, with as much moderation and equality of temper as we can. If thou art proſperous, and thy Affairs ſucceed according to thy deſires, do not for this cheriſh Pride, and Self-conceit, and vain Opinions of thy ſelf, as if thou only were fit to be regarded; others have been as fortunate as thy ſelf, and yet examples of this World's inconſtancy; and perhaps too they thought as highly of themſelves, and

were as meanly thought of. Art thou in Adverſity? this alſo has been a common caſe, and therefore do not repine at Providence; evil men have been puniſhed for their ſins, and good men tried by afflictions. We, as well as others before us, carry the cauſes and ſeeds of much trouble in our frame and conſtitution, and we cannot prevent a great deal of evil that comes by the free-will of others, nor hinder the operations of Providence which governs all. And therefore we ſhould not ſuffer our Affections violently to run after any of the deſirable things of this World, but take the World as it is, and then make the beſt on't, according to the wiſe man's advice in this Chapter, who ſpeaking of the turns and viciſſitudes of things, *I know*, ſays he, *there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoyce and to do good in his life*; that is, that every man ſhould eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour; that no man ſhould deny himſelf a ſupply of his reaſonable needs and deſires, whilſt he has wherewithal; and that upon no pretence whatſoever, he ſhould excuſe himſelf from doing good to others, whilſt it is in his power. For this is all the good of this life, *that is our portion under the Sun*, to uſe preſent comforts wiſely and charitably; to do good to our ſelves and others; to take reaſonable pleaſure in the Gifts of God, and to admit all reaſonable comfort under adver-

ſay; and in a word, to take in good part our mixture of good and evil as it falls out, but at no hand to expect more from the world than it will yield, and to lay a greater ſtreſs upon it than it has been ever able to bear. This undoubtedly is one deſign of the Wiſe man in this Book, to ſhew the vanity of this world, and thereby to leſſen our fondneſs of it, and yet to teach us us how to make a wiſe and good uſe of the comforts it affords; remembring all along, that the greateſt good of all, is to fear God and keep his Commandments.

And ſo I proceed to the ſecond particular, That God requireth that which is paſt; that is, as 'tis expreſt in the foregoing verſe, That *men ſhould fear before him*; for therefore does God in the variety of his Providences bring about the ſame things, becauſe 'tis the ſame end which he deſigns from firſt to laſt, *viz.* to teach us the fear of God, and to bring us to Religion and Virtue. This he hath required from the beginning of the world, and will do ſo to the end of it; and therefore no wonder that from firſt to laſt he uſeth much what the ſame variety of methods, by which *men ſhould learn to fear before him.*

The main thing intended I conceive is this, That we ſhould be as far from being diſpleaſed with the Duty that God requireth of us, as with the circumſtances our worldly-

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ly condition in which he hath ſet us; and that upon the ſame account, ſince as he governs by ſteddy Rules of Providence, ſo he governs by ſteddy Rules of Duty; and our condition in both reſpects is very much the ſame with theirs that have been before us. And we cannot be in ſuch circumſtances, making our Obedience hard to us, but others have been in the like. To forgive injuries, though they be great, is no new burden, for no man perhaps has lived in the world but has met with great provocations. To abſtain from unlawful pleaſures, though our Appetites prompt us never ſo violently to purſue them, is no ſtrange Duty; for thoſe that have been before us had the ſame natural Paſſions and Inclinations that we have. To live by Rules that are contrary to the Cuſtoms and Examples of the Age we live in, may ſeem unreaſonable to an inconſiderate man; but this has been the caſe of good men in almoſt all Ages of the World. Neither is thy Duty a new thing, whatever it be, nor the difficulty of performance new, whatever that be: ſtill God requireth that which is paſt.

Let therefore no man think, that he would be a good Chriſtian, if he had a good Eſtate; that he would be an honeſt man if it were not the way to die a Beggar; that he would be very humble, if he were once great, and above contempt, that he could forgive wrongs,

if his Enemies were not very ſpiteful and implacable; that he would ſerve God, if he would make a Hedge about all that he had; and obſerve the Rules of Religion, if he were not under unuſual Temptations to the contrary. Say not thou, that the Age in which thon liveſt, and the Circumſtances in which thou art, will not bear the practice of ſtrict Piety and true Virtue. Say not thou *what is the cauſe that that the former days are better than theſe, for thou doſt not inquire wiſely concerning this thing.*

For, 1. There is no end of theſe pretences and excuſes; ſuch things as theſe may always be ſaid, and there will be always more or leſs occaſion to plead them, and therefore they are never to be allowed. It ſeldom happens that we conclude truly, when we compare our own Circumſtances with other mens, and conclude to our own diſadvantage, as if God requir'd eaſier things of them than he does of us; and therefore it is not wiſely done to begin with an inquiry, which is almoſt certain to end in a falſe Judgment, eſpecially when we make a falſe Judgment to excuſe an evil practice.

But then if it were allowable for men thus to argue in excuſe for themſelves; The World is not ſo good a World as our Fathers found it, for my Affairs in it do not ſucceed ſo well as another man's, and my Temptations

tions are greater than his, and therefore I am excuſable, if I do not come up to the Piety and Integrity of others. If this I ſay were once allowed, how hard would it be for God to pleaſe man, and to keep him to his Duty, and that, if nothing elſe were to be ſaid, becauſe of the perpetual falſe Judgments we ſhould make in comparing our ſelves with others? Every man being ſenſible of his own Temptations, and the inconveniencies of the Times in which he lives, and of his own Temper, and of his proper condition and circumſtances in the World; would think Providence had been partial againſt him, and that the Duties of Religion preſſed harder upon himſelf than upon any other perſon: A poor man would think his rich Neighbour had more time, and greater obligations to ſerve God than himſelf: The wealthy man would believe that the poor man has more leiſure for Prayer, and fewer Temptations to earthly-mindedneſs than he has; God would loſe the thanks of every man, that could fancy another more happy than himſelf; and the Duty and Service of every man, that could fancy his own Temptations to be ſtronger than all other mens; and becauſe we feel our own good and evil, and do but gueſs at other mens by their outward appearance, we ſhould run into all manner of falſe judgment in comparing them with one another; but that there might be no

pretence for this wretched way of arguing, God hath not only tied us up all ſtrictly to the ſame Piety and Duty, but is pleaſed to let us know, as the truth is, that upon the whole matter, *there is nothing new under the ſun*; that upon the whole matter he hath made no difference between the preſent and former Ages, between our ſelves and other Perſons: Thy Neighbour perhaps has not all thoſe very Temptations thou haſt, but then he has his own; he has perhaps ſome obligations in one kind, which thou haſt not, but thou haſt the advantage of him in another: Every condition of life has not only its proper inconveniencies, but its proper advantages; and what is loſt in the difference of our ſtate from others, or in the change which we may ſuffer our ſelves, is made up another way; proſperity and ſucceſs ſhould make us love God better; but diſappointments on the other ſide, and adverſities, do very often make it more eaſy for us to love the world leſs; in a word, ſeek no excuſes for neglecting Piety and Virtue, from the difference of Times, Fortunes, Temptations, and the like, between thy ſelf and thoſe that live in this, or that lived in former Ages, for thou art likely to make but a fooliſh judgment, and wilt unavoidably run into great miſtakes in making the compariſon, and the reaſon of thy ſin will not bear the judgment of the All-ſeeing God,

nor

nor the examination of the laſt and terrible Day: But do thou believe God to be impartial, and to have tempered the Seaſons and Ages of the World, and the different condition of Perſons with a wiſe equality, with an unerring judgment. And do thou give up thy ſelf to follow and to comply with his wiſe Providence. And though *his judgements* in reſpect of others be *unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out*, yet thou ſhalt find that all his ways towards thy ſelf are ſo wiſe and ſo good, that at laſt thou ſhalt not wiſh there had been the leaſt alteration of them; And therefore I proceed farther, and in purſuance of what has been ſaid, add in the ſecond place:

2. Suppoſe that in ſome notable reſpects thy caſe may differ from another man's, yet this difference is not ſo great, as to make any material difference between thine obligation and his, to do that which God requires: Nor can we be leſs obliged ſo to do, than our Forefathers were; for in every Age it may be ſaid, *That which hath been is now*; and in every Age *God requireth that which is paſt*, and that under the ſame Motives and Obligations, without any difference ſo conſiderable, as to turn the Ballance one way or other; for let the World go which way it will, an Impious man is a Fool and a Wretch, and the Righteous man is Happy and Wiſe for himſelf, and therefore certain-

ly that is a very good condition, and a good World for thee, in which thou maiſt be as good as thou pleaſeſt to be.

What condition can be better for a man, than that which puts him under the immediate Protection and ſpecial Providence of God, who is not only the diſpoſer of long Life, and Wealth, and Honour, and Security, but of a greater thing than all theſe, and that is, a contented and chearful mind; nay, if thou wilt go and learn thoroughly all the qualities of a good man, and a good Chriſtian, ſome of them, as thou wilt find, will guard thee againſt the anger and diſpleaſure of others; others will conciliate their friendſhip and good will, and all together will breed reverence and high eſteem, and thou wilt find that to be true which St. *Peter* ſaid of his Times, *Who will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* Let it be once plain, that thou art ready to good, but eſpecially that thou art a Friend to the miſerable, and all men will riſe up and call thee bleſſed, and if need were, thou ſhouldſt be aſſiſted by thoſe that have not the heart to do ſuch things themſelves, and ſhalt feel the benefit of what humanity they have, if they have any left. Let it it be once plain, that thou art averſe from doing the leaſt injury, but canſt forgive the greateſt, and do ſeaſonable good turns to all Perſons upon occaſion; that thou art candid in thy

Cenſures,

Cenſures, and diſcreet in Reproofs; and that the affectation of ſeeming wiſer and better than others, has nothing to do in thy Wiſdom, and in thy Concern for the Honour of God, and the happineſs of Men; this will go a great way to make a bad man aſhamed to be thy enemy, ſo that he will not abuſe that man's name who ſeeketh not his own Honour, and yet is tender of another man's; nor do ill offices to one who is known to do none but good ones: Every one will probably ſhew himſelf a Friend to him that is a Friend to all. Finally, let thy Devotion to God be inartificial and unaffected, let it be expreſt by all decent ſigns of reverence and ſeriouſneſs, without oſtentation; and withal, let it be ſhewn by an univerſal regard of thy actions as done in his preſence; let it infuſe manlineſs into all thy Mirth, and guard thee in all thy Pleaſures from any approach to Intemperance and a brutiſh Senſuality; let it be ſeen in governing thy Paſſions, in tempering thy Diſcourſe, in modelling thy Behaviour, in making thee a good Man or Woman in all thy Converſation, and then thou maiſt venture thy ſelf abroad in an ill-natured World, and in a degenerate Age, and the odds are very great on thy ſide, that tho others may be flattered, thou ſhalt be reverenced, and that even thoſe who will not afford to give thee a good word, will be more unwilling to give thee a bad one; if

they

they will not do you any good, yet that they will do you no harm. All which is not only probable in the ſpeculation, but for the moſt part verified by experience. And therefore upon this account it ſhould ſeem that God lays no heavier burden upon one than another, but that *he* ſtill *requireth that which is paſt.*

But ſuppoſe things ſhould not always happen according to common Rules, but ſometimes leave their ordinary Courſe; as ſuppoſe a righteous man muſt ſuffer for his righteouſneſs; then I ſay, we muſt leave the conſideration of this world, and go to that of a better. And why ſhould we not ſuppoſe that ſo incomparable a ſtate of Bleſſings reſerved for a good man in the World to come, and juſtly eſteemed, and earneſtly deſired by him, ſhould not only make all preſent inconveniencies very light, but in compariſon none at all. Moſt certainly the Bleſſedneſs of an Everlaſting ſtate, does in it ſelf infinitely out-weigh all the tranſitory pleaſures of the world; and if we believe and live accordingly, they will out-weigh them in our eſteem and affection; and then inward peace and the hope of Heaven will ſatisfie us, that true Religion is a means of the beſt happineſs that can be attained here, though it does not bring worldly proſperity. And it does indeed make me very happy, though it does not bring me to honour; if it does but teach

teach me humility, though it does not make me wealthy, if it does but make me contented, though it does not give me the abundance of outward pleaſures, nor free me from injuries and wrongs; if it does but bleſs me with a quiet Mind and a good Conſcience, with a ſteddy government of my Paſſions, with meekneſs and eaſineſs to forgive, with the ſweet hope of a better Life, which when all is done is the true ground of a quiet and ſerene Enjoyment of our ſelves in this. Now theſe in all Ages of the world, have been the Reaſons upon which good men have built their reſolution and their practice of Virtue.

For they lived in all good Conſcience, not becauſe they expected the Riches and the Pleaſures of this world in recompence of their Piety and Juſtice, not that they thought their Virtue would be a fence about all they had to ſecure their Goods from Rapine, their Names from Reproach, their Perſons from Affronts and Injuries, and this courſe of Life from common or uncommon Troubles and Afflictions. They did not hope to make a gainful Traffick with Heaven by their Prayers and Charity, for the encreaſing of their Treaſures upon Earth. 'Tis true, God has often bleſt good men with ſtrange Proſperity in this world, but that was not their end, nor the reaſon of their dependance upon God,

God, and doing his Will. But they were ſuch as they were by Faith. By *Faith they wrought righteouſneſs*, *i. e.* they did the thing which God required, becauſe they expected *an heavenly Countrey*, and believed God to be *a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, tho not always with the Idolized Pleaſures and Greatneſs, no not always with the eaſe and quiet of this Life, yet without fail, with thoſe pure and raviſhing Joys of a better World, which will ſhortly begin and never end.

So that the Duties which God requires of us are the ſame; and whether the Temptations be exactly the ſame or not, which make our Duty any thing difficult, yet the Motives and Reaſons are the ſame which take away the difficulty, and make it equally eaſy again. And if as to God's Grace and the Reaſons of doing well, and the encouragements which good men always find in his Love and Favour, we are upon equal terms with all that have been before us, we may be very well content that we are as liable and obnoxious to all the untoward accidents of Life, as any of them ever were. For here is the ſame Reaſon Encouragement and Aſſiſtance to do what God requires, and to be happy therein, as there ever was.

And why ſhould not the ſame cauſes ſtill produce the ſame effects? For on the one ſide, thoſe holy Men and Women that are now with God, had the ſame Appetites and Paſſions to govern, that we have; they endured the ſame Temptations, and overcome them; they had the ſame natural ſence of good and evil that we have; and were encompaſſed with infirmities; and yet they walked by Faith, and performed their Duty to God, not to be admired and courted by men, but to be ſeen and rewarded of God. On the other ſide, we have the ſame God to truſt that they had, the ſame holy Word of God to direct us, the ſame Promiſes to inflame us, the ſame holy Spirit to aſſiſt us, the ſame Everlaſting Reward to encourage us, which they had: So that *God hath made no difference between them and us.* And let not us, I beſeech you, make ſo great a difference between our ſelves and them, as to miſs of that peace and ſatisfaction which they once enjoyed in this World, and of that infinite Reward which they have in part attained to in a better. A Reward ſo vaſt, that 'tis all one within a trifle, whether with or without Tribulation, whether with eaſe or difficulty, with pleaſure or pain we enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. For which God of his Infinite Mercy prepare us by his his holy Word, by his gracious Spirit,

rit, by his wiſe Providence, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. And now to God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all Thanks and Praiſe for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The

The Eight Sermon.

AN

Aſſize Sermon.

MATTH. V. 38, 39, 40.

Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I ſay unto you, That ye reſiſt not evil, but whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo: And if any man will ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo: And whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

I Am very ſenſible, that the Duty here preſcribed is ſo contrary to the Luſts and Paſſions of men, and to ſome Principles of Honour and Wiſdom which are currant

rant in the World, that it will be no very eaſy matter to perſuade moſt men to practice it. We are beholding to them, if they will allow it to be a ſpeculation fit for the Pulpit; but if we pretend to offer it as a Rule for daily uſe, we muſt pardon them there; for it does not ſeem by any means to be accommodated to the ſtate of Mankind; and 'tis purſued without any reſpect to, or regard of, the daily Occurrences of life. What living would there be for us in the World, if we ſhould forgive Injuries and Wrongs as faſt as they are done, and put up Affronts as often as they are put upon us? This would incourage the inſolent man that hath done us one injury, to offer a greater; and by our tameneſs in bearing the injuſtice of one man, we invite another to deal as ill by us, or worſe than the former; which is the way to be affronted by every Scoundrel, and trampled upon at every man's pleaſure. No, but let us make men afraid of preſuming to do us any harm, by letting them ſee what others have gotten by it; we muſt make them Examples, that dare put any contempt upon us, if we would live quietly, and maintain our Honour; and when others ſees how dangerous a thing it is to provoke us, we ſhall be reſpected and courted by them, they will be afraid to offend us, and think themſelves happy in our friendſhip: But to ſit down quietly under Abuſes, is the way to

be

be ſcorned and inſulted over by every body; Tell them of forgiving Injuries that want a Spirit to reſent them, and have not Courage enough to revenge them; this is a Principle fit for none but Cowards, or Fools; either for thoſe that are ſo dull as not to underſtand an Affront, or ſo fearful that they dare not return it; but it comes too late for men of Honour and Mettle, that know what is their Intereſt, and are able to defend it: And there is no reaſon in the world why they ſhould expoſe themſelves to Injuries and Abuſes, when they have Strength and Courage enough to guard themſelves from them. Thus in truth they ſay in their hearts, as they plainly ſhew by their Actions, revenging every little Diſreſpect, or Affront, or Injury of any kind, by returning an equal, or very often a vaſtly greater miſchief upon the wrong-doer, and this to ſecure themſelves, as they pretend, from further wrongs, by making all that obſerve it careful to forbear offending them in like manner, as they would be encouraged to do, if the preſent Injury were tamely paſt by, and nothing done to revenge it.

But in the firſt place, This Objection was well foreſeen by our Saviour; he knew it would be pretended againſt the Duty of forgiving Injuries, that this would be to pull great inconveniencies upon our ſelves, and invite every body that had any thing to get

by it, to multiply Injuries againſt us: And therefore he preſcribed the Rules of Forgiveneſs in thoſe very terms that imply he conſidered the Objection well enough. *But I ſay unto you, reſiſt not evil*; reſiſt not the evil, or the injurious man; *but whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other alſo.* The latter words are not to be taken in a literal ſenſe, as if I were to offer my ſelf to a ſecond ſtroke after I had been ſtruck once: But in a moral ſenſe (*i. e.*) venture a ſecond injury, rather than go about to be revenged of the firſt, though it ſhould be never ſo probable that the wrong-doer would take heart by thy meekneſs to add another abuſe to the former, thou ſhalt not ſecure thy ſelf by revenge for all that: And ſo *if any man will ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo.* Not that I am preſently to part with more to him than he has unjuſtly gotten by a wrong Verdict; but that I am to venture another loſs, rather than be reveng'd for the firſt: And ſo is the other inſtance to be underſtood: From whence it is plain, that our Bleſſed Saviour was not unmindful of the Objection that one would be apt to make againſt his Rule, though if this matter had not been ſo plainly implied, one would think a little modeſty would ſerve to acknowledge, that God is wiſer than man, and it is better for us to be governed by his Will, than by our

our own fooliſh Reaſonings; at leaſt, if we would be thought to be Chriſtians, we ſhould not think much to take the Authority of Our Lord and Maſter for a ſufficient Reaſon to do as he hath commanded us. And yet I do not think it difficult to give ſuch an account of the goodneſs and reaſonableneſs of this Law of our *Saviour*, that when we have conſidered it, we ſhall find, that we have far more reaſon to thank him, than be offended with him for it: To which purpoſe I ſhall firſt endeavour more particularly to explain what duty that is which is required of us in theſe Precepts.

1. And in the firſt place, Let us conſider what Light is offered to them from that Law of the *Jews*: *It hath been ſaid, An eye for eye, and a tooth for a tooth*: from whence our Saviour takes occaſion to introduce his own Precept, *But I ſay unto you, Reſiſt not evil*: From which we ſhall learn what we are to underſtand by *not reſiſting*. The Paſſage to which our Saviour refers, we find in *Exod.* 21. 24. There was a Law, That if a Woman with child was hurt by men ſtriving together, the Judge ſhould return according to this Rule, That life ſhould go for life, *eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot*: Which Law of Retaliation was alſo to take place againſt the falſe Witneſs, that he ſhould ſuffer the ſame puniſhment

which his Neighbour was in danger of by reaſon of his Teſtimony; *Deut.* 19. 21. *Thine eye ſhall not pity, but life ſhall go for life, eye for eye,* &c. But in *Levit.* 24. 20. The Rule is general; *If a man cauſe a blemiſh in his neighbour; as he hath done, ſo ſhall it be done unto him, breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth.* So that this was the Law by which their Courts of Judicature were to proceed in redreſs of Injuries; That he who had injur'd another, ſhould ſuffer as much injury as he had done himſelf: Wherefore, when our Saviour does from hence take occaſion to ſay, *Reſiſt not evil,* his deſign was to abridge his Diſciples of ſome liberty that was allowed to the *Jews* in the matter of impleading their Adverſaries in Courts of Judicature: For if by theſe words, *Reſiſt not evil,* he had meant only, that no private perſon ſhould upon an injury received, proceed immediately to eaſe himſelf, and redreſs the wrong by doing the like to the injurious man, but ſtay till the Cauſe was heard, and the Law had decided the Matter; he had then forbidden no more than what the *Jews* knew was unlawful already; wherefore it is plain, that ſomething is here prohibited, which was formerly allowed. For, ſays our Saviour, *But I ſay unto you, Reſiſt not evil:* But this is not to be underſtood, as if he had preſcribed to places of Civil Judicature, how to proceed againſt Offenders that were brought into

into them, but he has ſtill left them to proceed according to their ſeveral Laws and Cuſtoms: For his *Kingdom was not of this World*, he came not to reverſe or alter the Forms and Methods of Government, but left them upon the ſame foundation ſtanding as they did before. So that although here is an abridgment of ſome liberty that the private *Jew* had before; yet if after this Prohibition of our Saviour, had any of his Diſciples demanded Juſtice according to the Law of Retaliation againſt an Offender in ſome caſe where he ought not to have done it, according to his Maſter's Doctrine, yet it had not been only lawful, but requiſite for the Magiſtrate to have given Sentence according to Law: and the ſame holds true in all Chriſtian Kingdoms and Commonwealths.

Thus much concerning the ſenſe of *not reſiſting evil.*

2. But in the ſecond place, Although the Precept ſeems to be general, yet I ſhall make it plain, That 'tis not all ſorts of Injuries that we are required not to complain of, but to ſit down tamely and ſilently under them, And that 1. By ſhewing the nature of thoſe Injuries that are particularly inſtanced in; And 2. By proving from thence, that they are only Injuries of that nature which we are not ſo much as to *reſiſt* by courſe of Law.

1. Let us conſider the nature of thoſe Injuries which are the inſtances of that *evil* we are *not to reſiſt*. And,

1. It is plain, that they are only private Wrongs, not direct Offences againſt the publick good and ſafety, not Contempts of Authority, nor the violation of Laws made purpoſely for the ſecurity of Government.

2. And theſe private Wrongs are ſuppoſed alſo to be of a light and ſupportable nature, ſuch as may very well be born by a Wiſe man, without ſuffering any conſiderable prejudice, while he neglects to proſecute the Offender at Law; And that you will ſee by the following Inſtances, which I come now to explain.

The firſt is, That of *ſmiting on the cheek*; *Whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on thy right cheek*, &c. To *ſmite upon the cheek*, ſignifies proverbially that ſmiting which was intended for a diſgrace, or a mere affront; and this uſually was by ſtriking with the Palm of the hand; which becauſe it was moſtly uſed by the *Greeks* towards their Slaves, it came to be a Proverbial Expreſſion of uſing a man ſcornfully and imperiouſly, and to include any kind of ſmiting, which, according to the common interpretation of the word, redounded only to the diſgrace of him that ſuffered it; not endangering the Life,

Life, or hurting the Limbs. So that the Injuries which our Saviour notes in the firſt place, are thoſe which go no further, than the expoſing of a man to the laughter of the People, who take it for a mean and diſhonourable part to put up a meer Affront, to bear the lighteſt Indignity, or to be content under any contumelious Words or Actions: And his Rule in this caſe is, That we ſhould rather venture the ſuffering ſuch another Injury, than make it a matter of publick Complaint.

The ſecond inſtance is this: *If any man ſhall ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo.* The Injuries that are intended under this inſtance, are againſt a man's Eſtate and Poſſeſſions, as the former were againſt his Body and Reputation. And here likewiſe it is plain, That the damage ſuſtained by this Injury, or the like, is very ſupportable, and ſuch as can hardly be felt by a man that enjoys a competent Eſtate, as he is here ſuppoſed to do, who is not to revenge ſuch a loſs. For the inner and upper Garment, which were tokens of men that were well to paſs in the World, ſhews that he would be much to blame to trouble himſelf, or any body elſe, about a loſs ſo inconſiderable to him. And our Saviour's meaning in this Inſtance, is, That if a Controverſy ariſe between thee and thy Neighbour about ſome little matter of property, where thou

art ſure the right is on thy ſide, and the Money, Goods, or Land, in diſpute, is as much thine, as the Cloaths on thy back, and if by a Suit at Law he orders the matter ſo, as to rob thee of thy right, Thou ſhalt trouble thy ſelf no further, but ſit down quietly by the loſs which thou art very well able to bear. And if another man be in poſſeſſion of ſomething that is thine, detaining thy right from thee, and the matter be not conſiderable, then if thou haſt no other way to relieve thy ſelf but by Law, thou ſhalt not in ſuch caſes as theſe run preſently to Counſel, and commence a Suit, but bear ſuch leſſer Injuries with ſilence and patience: So that a Chriſtian ought not to go to Law for ſmall matters, not only when his Right is uncertain, but when 'tis clear; not only where there is no danger of inviting ſuch another Injury as he bears at preſent, but where there is: And the words of our Saviour are as plain to that purpoſe as any thing can be, and nothing leſs can be underſtood by them.

The third inſtance is this: *And whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain*; And under this Inſtance are contained all little infringments of our Privileges and Immunities which ſome men are exceedingly tender of, and are ever ready to make a great Combuſtion, rather than ſuffer them to be invaded in the leaſt degree. The

mean-

meaning is, That if the Officer that is to preſs men for publick Carriages ſhould compel thee to go a mile unjuſtly, that is, one fourth part above the ordinary Stage that the Law appoints, which is but a ſmall matter, thou ſhalt not make a quarrel about it, tho thy patience may prove an occaſion of his compelling thee the next time to go two miles more than there is reaſon for: So likewiſe in all matters of this nature, If our Freedoms and Immunities are lightly invaded, if too much ſervice be required; if an Office be put upon a man which is ſome breach upon his Privilege (though he may ſuſtain it without great inconveniencie) in theſe, and the like Caſes, it is the plain Command of our Saviour, That we ſhould make no publick Complaint, nor proſecute the Perſon at Law, for the maintaining of our Privilege. This I take to be a plain and true Account of the meaning of the Inſtances.

The manner of our Saviour's Expreſſions was ſuitable to the Cuſtoms of the Place where he was, and to the way of diſcourſe in that time; but the Doctrine he delivers is a Rule for all times and places, and obliges every one of his Diſciples, *i. e.* altogether, to remit tolerable and ſmall Injuries, whether againſt Body or Reputation, as in the firſt inſtance; or Eſtate and Poſſeſſion, as in the ſecond; or Freedoms and Privileges, as in the third.

And

And now I proceed to ſhew, That the limitation of the Rules belongs to the general Prohibition, *Reſiſt not evil.* And that

1. Becauſe if our Saviour had meant, that no kind of Injuries were to be reſiſted, there had been no need of adding any particular inſtances of evil that were not to be reſiſted.

2. If the greateſt as well as the leaſt Injuries were not to be redreſt by courſe of Law, then ſeeing our Saviour was pleaſed to tell us, under what Injuries in particular he would have us to ſit down quietly, we cannot imagine, but he would have inſtanced in the greateſt; for all men are certainly more unwilling to bear a greater than a leſs wrong. If therefore no kind of evil were to be reſiſted, if this had been his meaning, he would have ſaid, If thine Enemy ſeek to take away thy Life, or to ruin thy Eſtate, or to deprive thee of thy Liberty, thou ſhalt not guard thy ſelf againſt him by the Laws of thy Countrey; and then theſe inſtances had certainly ſhewn, that the general Prohibition was to be underſtood without any limitation at all: For this is a true Concluſion, I muſt bear the greateſt Injuries without complaint, therefore I muſt bear the leſs; but it cannot be concluded, I muſt bear the leſs, therefore I muſt ſubmit to the greater. Wherefore, I ſay, ſince it had been our

Saviour's

Saviour's Intention, that we were not to right our ſelves againſt any Injury by courſe of Law, the Inſtances mentioned do not come home to the purpoſe; it is therefore plain that was not his meaning.

From what hath been ſaid, it will now be very eaſy to repreſent from our Saviour's Rule, what a Chriſtian may, and what he ought to do, when he is provoked by the rudeneſs, or injured by the malice, or any way uſurped upon by the Power and Policy of his Neighbour. And,

Firſt of all, It is very plain, that all private Revenge, whether of greater or leſſer Wrongs, is utterly unlawful: And the truth is, for men to go about to right themſelves any other way after an Injury received, than by courſe of Law, that needed not to have been forbidden by our Saviour, for it was unlawful before; and 'tis unjuſt in every man, tho much more unbecoming a Chriſtian, than any one elſe, ſince he is obliged to ſet an Example of that forgiveneſs and meekneſs of ſpirit, as for ſome Injuries to ſeek no redreſs at all, no not by Legal Proceedings.

How ſtrange a thing is it then, that the way of perſonal Revenge ſhould grow into faſhion and credit amongſt Chriſtians! a way of revenge ſo directly contrary, not only to the Law of our Saviour's Religion, but to right Reaſon, and the common Principles of Juſtice. For let but this Principle be once

once admitted, let it be publiſhed in the World, That every man may right himſelf his own way, when he is injured by another, and what horrible conſequences muſt it needs produce? For when one man has wrong'd and abuſed another, to allow the injured Party to right himſelf in the way of perſonal revenge, is to provoke the wrong-doer to a new attempt againſt him, and by conſequence to prolong and continue the quarrel, till it be ended in the deſtruction either of the one, or the other. What a woful thing is it, that if once an Injury be done, and contention be begun between two men, to conclude that they muſt never be reconciled, but proceed to miſchief each other till one of them be utterly deſtroyed! and yet that is the natural conſequence of private Revenge, which therefore no man ſhould give the leaſt countenance to, that pretends to Reaſon and Humanity. Beſides, it is in it ſelf an unjuſt thing to do evil to another, becauſe I have received injury from him; for a man cannot juſtly be both a Judge and a party in his own Cauſe, as every man is who preſumes to vindicate his own Wrongs; he that complains, is not to give Sentence, and then to execute it; but to refer the matter to indifferent Perſons, or to Common Juſtice, that the Redreſs may be according to Reaſon and Law: But if he takes Revenge for himſelf, as he is not fit to be a Judge in his

his own Cauſe, ſo neither has he any power to be ſo: Whatever evil he determines to inflict upon his Enemy, he is unjuſtly reſolved upon; and if he ſucceeds, 'tis unjuſtly done, for it belonged not to him to puniſh his Adverſary: *Vengeance is God's only*, and theirs to whom God hath committed it, *viz.* Kings and Magiſtrates. But Becauſe another man hath done evil, it is not lawful for me one jot the more to do evil too: He hath injur'd me, but I muſt not therefore be unjuſt to him, by aſſuming a power over him that I have not; nor be injurious to the Commonwealth, by bringing many Diſorders into it; or to the Soveraign Authority, by uſurping ſome part of it; or to the Law, by putting it out of office: Nay, I might add, to my own Soul, by breaking the Law of God, by doing deſpite to Religion, by caſting ſcorn and contempt upon the beſt and moſt excellent Rules of it. In ſhort, private and perſonal Revenge (be the Injury what it will) is of moſt pernicious conſequence; it is a ſavage and barbarous Cuſtom, it is extremely unjuſt in it ſelf, and monſtrouſly impious and unchriſtian. But,

2. It does not follow from this Doctrine of our Saviour, as I have already ſhewn, that we muſt lay our ſelves open to all manner of Injuries and Wrongs whatſoever; but if great injuſtice be offered, or conſiderable damage be done to us we may guard our ſelves

ſelves againſt the former, and redreſs the latter by proceeding according to the Laws. Were it not that the Law gives relief and redreſs to the Innocent, and allots puniſhment to the Evil doer, every thing almoſt would be out of order, and hardly any body ſecure, but he that makes himſelf ſo by Iniquity and Oppreſſion; and things would ſoon be brought to that paſs, which the worſt of men can deſire to ſee.

Therefore if a man be greatly injured by his Neighbour, it is but reaſonable for him to make publick Complaint of it, that the Injury may be redreſt; or if it be but deſign'd, that he ſhould guard himſelf againſt it by ſuch means as the Law provides; and that not only for the ſake of a man's own Intereſt, which in great matters he is not to neglect in wiſdom for himſelf, but in charity alſo to the Evil doer, that if poſſible, a check may be given to his evil courſe: The hands of the Violent are to be tied up, and the mouth of the Slanderer is to be ſtopt, when they proceed to commit great Iniquities; that whether they are either reſtrain'd, or puniſhed, they may bethink themſelves of the evil they have done, and by ſhame, and fear, and ſuffering, be driven to repentance: At leaſt very neceſſary it is for the good of the World, and for a caution to others, that they who meditate miſchief, and are Examples of great Injuſtice, ſhould be Examples

of

of the unſucceſsfulneſs, and the puniſhment of it too; that thoſe who would be inclin'd to imitate the former, may be aware of it in conſideration of the latter. And therefore we are to thank God, that there are temporal Laws to reſtrain men, or at leaſt to puniſh Offences and Wrongs that men may commit one againſt another. And if we are to be thankful for them, moſt certainly it is very lawful, yea very prudent and neceſſary to make uſe of them for the redreſſing or guarding our ſelves againſt great Injuries: For if we ſhould not uſe them, in this caſe there would be no uſe of them at all: Now this it is that plainly ſhews our Saviour's Rule here in the Text, to be no hard and grievous thing, that although it certainly bars all private Revenge, and reſtrains men from making the utmoſt advantage of Human Laws, yet it leaves every man free to ſecure himſelf, againſt great Injuries, or to redreſs himſelf, after they have been done him, by the benefit of the Laws; and therefore it is no great trial of his patience and meekneſs, that our Saviour has here required. But,

3. In the third place it muſt be added, That in proſecuting him that hath greatly injured us, or defending our ſelves againſt one that would, we muſt beware of a revengeful and bitter ſpirit; for this is as much againſt the reaſon of the Law, as retaliating the

the ſmalleſt Wrongs; which a man would not do, if it were not more to eaſe an angry mind, than to get reparation for the wrong, if he did not deſign the troubling and vexing of his Adverſary, and the pleaſure that comes that way, more than any real profit to himſelf: Therefore to perform our Saviour's Rule in righting our ſelves upon the greateſt Wrongs, we muſt turn out all hatred, malice, and revengefulneſs out of our minds, deſigning no more harm to our Adverſay, than what is neceſſary for the righting of our ſelves, or for the ends of Common Juſtice; and when we have a man, that has deſerved any ill of us, at an advantage, we ſhould uſe it moderately, and rather be ſatisfied with leſs reparation than is due to the nature of the Offence, than exact the extremity of what may be due by Law. But,

4. We are bound in duty to our Saviour altogether to remit leſs Injuries and Offences, *viz.* ſuch as he has mentioned in the particular Inſtances, *i. e.* not only to forbear righting our ſelves by our own Authority, but even by troubling Courts of Juſtice about it, although the Magiſtrate were bound to do us right, if we complained of the lighteſt Offences that were by Law puniſhable. In ſhort, As to meer Affronts, and inconſiderable Debts, and ordinary Treſpaſſes, and ſuch Injuries as may eaſily be born withall, this Rule of our Saviour holds generally

and

and univerſally true: *But I ſay unto you, Reſiſt not Evil.*

The only difficulty in the underſtanding of our Duty in this point, is, that of being always able to determine between Injuries that are ſo little, that we muſt abſolutely remit them, and ſuch as we may redreſs by juſt appeal.

But to this, I ſay, where the Caſe is plain, as 'tis very often, there is no room for pretending the difficulty: He that offers at a man's Life, or at his Eſtate, or at his good Name, by a dangerous Calumny, he doth exceed the degree of doing wrong, which is *not to be reſiſted:* But on the other hand, a meer Contempt, and ſuch a light Encroachment upon our Priviledges, or Freedoms, or any of our Rights, as our Saviour here mentions, can yield no matter of doubt, whether they are little enough to be paſt quite over. And therefore in the firſt place, be ſure to perform thy duty of this kind in all caſes, where 'tis plain; and if thou gaineſt ſo much honeſty and ingenuity, as that comes to, it will give thee ſome light and direction where the caſe is doubtful.

There is indeed ſuch variety in the Circumſtances of Men, that that which to one man would be a very ſmall and inconſiderable Injury, would happen to be a very great one, and hardly ſupportable by another: But if it be really difficult to know whether

the Injury committed be little or great, all things conſidered, To this it might not be unfitly ſaid, That in doubtful Caſes it is always beſt to take the ſafeſt courſe, and to chuſe that ſide which will ſecure our Conſcience, rather than that which we are prompted to by our worldly Intereſt.

But I add further, That if a man be honeſt and diſcreet (which ſuch Rules as theſe ſuppoſe men to be) it is no hard matter to know what Injuries are ſo ſmall, that according to our Saviour's Rule, they are totally to be remitted. There is a natural ſagacity in a good mind to diſcern between good and evil in theſe things, and by which it can apply general Rules to particular Caſes. It is not ſaid in Scripture, or any Law, how much Wine is lawful to be drunk at a time, and yet Drunkenneſs is forbidden; nor how many hours in a day are to be ſpent in honeſt labour and induſtry, and yet I am not to be idle: Nor is it poſſible that any ſuch particular Rules in theſe matters ſhould be laid down, which can reach the Caſe of every man in every circumſtance: So is it in this matter; that may be a very great injury to one man, that is but a little one to another: And that he may be able to diſcern the difference, he muſt either make uſe of his own honeſty and diſcretion, or of ſome bodies elſe: The latter way may be very good, either when a man is in danger of being partial

tial to his worldly Intereſt, and over-valuing a ſmall Injury, or of leaning too much to a ſcrupulous Conſcience, and undervaluing a great one. It may then be very fit to take advice of a man of known wiſdom and integrity, who being indifferent, is beſt able to judge in the former; and being honeſt as well as diſcreet, may alſo judge of the latter caſe, and then to follow his Judgment. This is the beſt way a man can take, and God requires no more, than the uſing of the beſt means we can to apply Rules given in general terms to our own particular Circumſtances; and he that does accordingly, may and ought to be ſatisfied in his own Conſcience, that he hath done his Duty. But if a man's mind be furniſhed with the Principles and Reaſons of his Duty in the matter of forgiveneſs of Wrongs, if alſo he be a diſcreet man in the ordering of his other Affairs, there is no reaſon to fear, but he will be likewiſe able of himſelf to diſcern between Injuries that may be altogether born withal, and thoſe that may and ought to be redreſt: But the truth is, that which men are chiefly wanting in, is a ſenſe of their Duty. And therefore what I have further to ſay, ſhall tend to the awakening of us into ſuch a ſenſe, by repreſenting the Reaſons and Motives to the meekneſs and patience which our Saviour requires of us: And if theſe do prevail in our minds, there is no great reaſon to fear on the

other hand, leſt we ſhould be ſo indiſcreet as to ſuffer great harm, without uſing lawful means to help our ſelves. And therefore,

Firſt of all, Let us conſider the Example of God himſelf towards us, whom we have daily provoked by our ſins, and yet he has born with us hitherto, and patiently waited for our repentance. If God were ſo haſty with us, as we are apt to be with one another, we had been long ſince conſumed in his diſpleaſure. It is moſt certainly true, that his forbearance and long-ſuffering is the ground of mens preſumption in going on to offend him. If *ſentence* were always *ſpeedily executed againſt an evil work, the heart of the ſons of men would not be ſet in them to do evil:* And yet although he knows that forbearing to puniſh us when we deſerve it, very often proves the occaſion of multiplying provocations againſt him, he notwithſtanding is patient and long-ſuffering towards us; not only forbearing to inflict thoſe puniſhments which we every day deſerve, but continuing thoſe bleſſings to us which we every day forfeit. But what a great deal of ſin and preſumptuous diſobedience had been prevented, if God had been ſo ready to take fire againſt us, as an angry man is to proſecute his Neighbour with revenge? But then who of us could thus long have

have ſtood before him? which of us had not long before this periſhed under the ſtrokes of his angry Juſtice? and who are we, that nothing can eaſe our minds under the ſenſe of any petty wrong, but preſent revenge? that we muſt have immediate ſatisfaction for every Affront, or ſecure our ſelves againſt poſſible Injuries for the future, by making an example of every man that treſpaſſeth upon us? What pride and haughtineſs, what fooliſh and overweening conceit is there in this one thing! If we do but conſider that our Maker (infinitely great as well as good) has been infinitely provoked by us, and has yet thus long mercifully ſpared us: If his *goodneſs, his forbearance, and long-ſuffering leadeth us to repentance*, namely, to repent of all our other ſins, much more of this, which is ſo directly contrary to his Example, much more, I ſay, of a proud malicious and revengeful ſpirit, eſpecially if we conſider, that he that is for *judgment without mercy, ſhall have no mercy*; that this is the Rule by which God will proceed againſt us in Judgment, That he will *not forgive us our treſpaſſes, if we from our hearts do not forgive every one his brother their treſpaſſes*; and therefore, unleſs we will deprive our ſelves of God's mercy in that day, when we ſhall be moſt ſenſible that we need it; unleſs we chuſe to be judg'd in rigour, and dealt withal according to the extremity of Juſtice, we muſt lay aſide

anger, malice, and revenge, and *put on bowels of mercies, kindneſs, meekneſs, long-ſuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel againſt any, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven us.*

What ſhould I ſpeak of the Example of our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, who ſuffered the greateſt indignities, who bare the moſt Contumelious Reproaches, who was provoked by the moſt Outragious Affronts and Injuries, who yet *when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly*; who at laſt underwent the moſt ignominious death of the Croſs, and even then, when the ſenſe of his pain and reproach was moſt bitter to him, prayed to his Father to forgive his Enemies, and excuſed as well as might be, their inexcuſeable wickedneſs, by ſaying, *They know not what they do.*

It is a great ſhame for us to make any difficulty of paſſing by ordinary Wrongs and Treſpaſſes after ſuch an Example, or at leaſt to pretend that we are his Diſciples and Followers, while we are ſo contrary to him in temper and diſpoſition.

2. Neither are we left without all guard againſt future Injuries, if we ſilently paſs over thoſe that are committed againſt us at firſt; for this is in it ſelf a proper way to ſecure us againſt wrongs for the time to come; although

although it is pretended, that patience will but expoſe a man to further Abuſes, yet generally it is true, that revenge expoſes him to a great many more: For hereby the quarrel is continued, which elſe in all probability would have been at an end; but if we fall to revenge, we put our Adverſary upon new attempts againſt us, whoſe anger or pride had been in likelihood ſatisfied, if we had not again provoked him: Beſides, if he be one that ſeeks our miſchief, he will not fail to multiply abuſes and wrongs upon us, becauſe he ſees, his Deſigns take place (*i. e.*) that we are inwardly moved and diſquieted at his ill uſing us: Whereas by patience and forgiveneſs we ſhew him, that it is to no purpoſe for him to go about to moleſt us, and that he is ever like to be diſappointed, when he would create us any harm or trouble: By deep reſentment of a little Injury, we make it a great one; and if we are reſolved to be even with every fooliſh and inconſiderate perſon, we ſhall be ſure to vex our ſelves, and to be revenged on our Adverſary at our own coſt: He that lightly paſſes by an Offence, has done with it, but he is ſtill in pain that cannot reſt till he is reveng'd; and therefore if we would conſult our own eaſe, and diſappoint our Enemy, we muſt get the better of an angry and turbulent ſpirit, and let Vengeance alone, which ſuch Creatures as we are cannot purſue, but to our own harm

and vexation: And indeed this is the proper way to gain our Enemy, and to make him be *at peace with us*, when we forbear to proſecute him, and make him ſmart for his fault, eſpecially if it be in our power to be reveng'd; that is a likely way of melting him into ſorrow and repentance that he hath wrong'd us at all; for though there are ſome ſo croſs and inflexible, that they grow worſe by forbearance and gentleneſs; yet ſure the generality of men are not ſo ſavage and untractable: There are few men, but if you give them time to conſider it, will repent of having done you the leaſt harm, after they ſee you have forgiven them, and that no rancour is left in your mind againſt them: The true reaſon why one man that hath abuſed another is apt to meditate more miſchief againſt him afterwards, is, becauſe he imagines, that now a breach is made, it will never be repaired, and that the unkindneſs will never be forgotten; and therefore his laſt way is to ſecure himſelf, by adding more injuries to the former: But therefore, if he were indeed convinced, that thou beareſt no ill-will againſt him, and art fully reconciled to him, it is probable, that he would be very glad to give over doing thee any wrongs, and take the opportunity of becoming thy Friend, and then thou haſt gained thy Brother to thy ſelf; and which is more, thou mayeſt have gained him to God too. But if this

Courſe

Courſe ſhould fail, there is another which ſeems to be ſo effectual, that it cannot but take place, and that is to do him a good turn that hath wronged thee; which is the Apoſtles Advice, *Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good*: which implies that this may be done; and indeed 'tis morally impoſſible, that this way ſhould not take place: For although ordinary kindneſs and good turns may be deſpiſed, yet one of ſo exceeding a nature, as doing good againſt evil, ſeems to have an irreſiſtible force to prevail with an ill man: Every good turn that thou doſt to an Enemy, is doubled by this conſideration, that he hath not deſerv'd it, but the contrary; and ſurely he will be aſhamed till he hath requited thee in ſome meaſure, not only by acknowledgment of his fault, but by returning the benefit: *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink; ſo ſhalt thou heap coals of fire upon his head*, i. e. Thou ſhalt melt him into ſorrow, that he hath wronged thee in the leaſt, and make him thy Friend for the future. So little reaſon is there to ſuſpect, that unleſs we be revenged of every Injury and Affront that is offer'd to us, we expoſe our ſelves to more Injuries and Wrongs than we have ſuffer'd already: And therefore that Objection which our Saviour ſaw would be made to his Doctrine concerning forgiveneſs of Injuries, does in con-

concluſion appear to be no real Objection againſt it.

And now let no man ſuppoſe that this Rule of putting up Affronts and Contempts, Wrongs and Injuries daily, with patience and forgiveneſs; is rendred fitteſt to be preached to men of mean Spirits and Callings, who are in good manners to be content with Affronts, and to put up all Injuries that are offered them by their Betters; but that it is not proper for men of Quality and Honour, to whom it would be a diſparagement to ſit down under Wrongs and Abuſes as tamely as a Peaſant ought to do, for this is a moſt unreaſonable pretence. On the other hand, There is nothing that becomes men of birth and breeding, of great place and renown in the World, more, than forgiveneſs of Injuries: This is an argument of ſo much greatneſs of mind, and command over our own Paſſions, that nothing can be greater; and to leave it to men of lower degree, is to diſparage themſelves, and to loſe one of the greateſt advantages of their high Eſtate in the World. *'Tis the glory of a man to paſs by an Offence*, ſaith *Solomon*; and we all know, that the Royal Prerogative is in no one thing more eminently ſeen, than in pardoning Offences, and extending mercy to thoſe that are under the Sentence of the Law: And why ſhould it be thought diſhonourable to do that which God does, who

is good to the unmerciful and the unjuſt; to do not only that which he requires, but that, I ſay, which he does; and if any man can be ſo fooliſh as to think meanly of us for ſo doing, we cannot help it, and ſhould not be troubled at it upon our own, but only upon his account: For he is the wiſe and exact Perſon, whoſe *praiſe is not of men, but of God.*

Thus have I endeavoured to recommend to your meditation and practice a Rule, which, if it be one of the hardeſt, is alſo one of the moſt excellent Rules of Religion: It is for the glory of the Goſpel that we can ſhew it in our Bibles: It will be for our glory if we can ſhew it in our practice: But let us not forget the abſolute neceſſity of ſubmitting to it, if ever we hope to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and there is no Argument ſo powerful, as that which is drawn from neceſſity: So neceſſary it is, that our Saviour thought fit to make us acknowledge it every day in our Prayers, and has put it in as a Condition, that we muſt our ſelves undertake for, when we ask forgiveneſs of God: *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us.* Such great care has he taken to inculcate the great neceſſity of this practice, that though he repeated no other part of his Prayer; and although this ſeems to be the plaineſt, yet he repeats the ſubſtance of this; *For if ye forgive*

give not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your treſpaſſes. But then with what face can they pretend to be Chriſtians, with what quiet can they think of a Future Judgment, who take pleaſure in the doing of Injuries and Wrongs, who are as forward to treſpaſs againſt their Brother, as they are backward to forgive their Brother's Treſpaſſes? If I were to deſcribe what a true Chriſtian is, by taking ſome one point of Chriſtian duty, the performance whereof does in all reaſonable conſtruction imply all the reſt, it ſhould be this, That he is one. who would not for the world do the leaſt injury, but can forgive the greateſt. And God grant that this may be our practice for the reſt of our lives.

The

The Ninth Sermon.

AN Aſſize Sermon.

MATTH. 5. 34, 35, 36, 37.

But I ſay unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footſtool; neither by Jeruſalem, for it is the City of the great King; neither ſhalt thou ſwear by thy head, becauſe thou canſt not make one hair white or black; but let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatſoever is more than this, cometh of evil.

THat Religion and the fear of God, and a ſenſe of his Authority, are Principles ſuppoſed by the Laws of God, is from hence evident, that in great part

part the proceſs of our Courts depends upon Teſtimony given under the obligation of an Oath; for though the uſe of an Oath there is required by Humane Authority, yet the peculiar obligation it lays upon us to ſpeak the Truth, is antecedent to all Humane Laws, being founded originally upon our Duty to God; wherefore though an Oath in reſpect of ſome uſe and end of it, may be a Civil Act, yet in reſpect of the reaſon whereby it obligeth, it is an Act of Religion; for this reaſon it is highly conducible to the end of Civil Government to maintain a ſenſe of Religion in the minds of men; and particularly it muſt be of great uſe to make them obſerve thoſe Laws of God, which are plainly deſigned to ſecure the reverence which is due to an Oath, and to keep men at a wide diſtance from the danger of Perjury: Such is that Law of our Saviour, which I have read to you, which therefore doth not tend more to the Honour of God, than to the Common Good of Mankind; and this no man can be ignorant of, who conſiders what a vaſt influence the uſe of an Oath hath upon all the Affairs of Humane Life. This is that whereby we come to confide in one another about things of the greateſt moment to our lives; this is that which is ſo often neceſſary to ſecure our Properties, to ſave us from wrong, and to make even our Enemy to do us right; it is this which all Proceſſes in Courts

Courts of Judicature are governed by, which is ſuppoſed to all Adminiſtrations of Juſtice, and gives an end to all Controverſies about matters of Fact, which will be no otherways decided; it is this which muſt either direct or miſguide the wiſeſt Magiſtrates, and make their Sentence it ſelf either right or wrong; and by which we are either ſtrongly guarded againſt Injury, or almoſt inevitably expoſed to it; of how great conſequence therefore muſt it be to the good of all men to have the reverence of an Oath ſecured, and to make every man tremble at the thought of Perjury, ſince the World cannot be well-governed, nor the Adminiſtrations of Juſtice go forward, without the uſe of Oaths; and yet we had better be without them, in as many caſes as there are wherein Men are not afraid to be Forſworn; and yet alas! it is the daily complaint of our Age, that the fear of an Oath is almoſt baniſhed out of the World: And although it be really a thouſand times more dreadful to profane the Name of God, by calling him to be a witneſs to our Lies, than it would be to play before the Mouth of a Canon while it was Firing; yet, if we may believe the Reports which are ſometimes made from Courts of Judicature, there are very few Peaſants ſo puſillanimous but they are hardy enough to Swear

to

to any thing; and with equal confidence to contradict one another in the plaineſt matters, and when under an equal obligation to ſpeak the Truth, by the Invocation of the dreadful Name of God. Now if we would enquire how the ſacredneſs of an Oath is grown into ſuch contempt, I do not queſtion, but the common and frequent uſe of Swearing in our ordinary Converſation, would be found at leaſt acceſſary to that diſhonour which is done to God, and that miſchief to men by the ſo frequent Perjuries of our Age. Oaths are grown ſo familiar with us, that men have forgotten the nature and true uſe of them, and are not ſenſible, that they call the Divine Vengeance upon themſelves, if their Teſtimonies be not exactly true; they have been proſtituted to the meaneſt Services, and profan'd by common uſe, and then no wonder if the Sacred Obligation peculiar to them be forgotten, when they are uſed in thoſe ſpecial caſes, for which they ought to be reſerved; therefore if we would do any thing to recover the fear of an Oath amongſt our Countrey-men, we muſt endeavour to do it by means contrary to thoſe, whereby it hath been ſo generally loſt, that is, by abſtaining our ſelves, and not only ſo, but by diſſwading and reſtraining others as much as in us lies, from that familiar and faſhionable Swearing, which is one of the great reproaches of our Age; to which end I ſhall endeavour

endeavour to explain the meaning and reaſon of theſe words of our Saviour.

And in them I ſhall conſider,

1. The Law it ſelf, *Swear not at all, but let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay.*
2. The ſanction and reaſon of this Law, *viz.* 1. The Authority of our Saviour, *But I ſay unto you.* 2. The nature of the thing it ſelf. *For whatſoever is more than this, cometh of evil.*

In the Law it ſelf we are to conſider the Prohibition, and the Precept.

1. The Prohibition; which contains,

1. A general Rule, *Swear not at all.*
2. Some particular inſtances whereto the Rule extends, *Neither by Heaven, nor by Earth, nor by Hieruſalem, nor by thy head.*
3. The Reaſon why the Rule extends to theſe Inſtances; not by Heaven, *for it is God's Throne*; not by the Earth, *for it is his Footſtool*; not by *Hieruſalem*, *for it is the City of the great King*; not by thy Head, *for thou canſt not make one hair white or black.*

Let us begin with the general Rule, *Swear not at all*; from which words the Anabaptiſts and Quakers have contended,

that an Oath, or an Appeal to God, that what we ſay is true, is in no caſe lawful: I ſhall here ſhew the contrary, and prove that the meaning of the Rule is this, That we are not to Swear in our common and daily Converſation with Men; and this will appear,

1. By comparing the Prohibition with the Precept.
2. With the particular inſtances whereunto the Prohibition extends.

1. With the Precept, *But let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay,* (*i. e.*) let this be the manner of your ordinary diſcourſe, barely to affirm or deny, or if need be, ſometimes with vehemence, which perhaps is intimated by the repetition of *yea* and *nay*.

Now it is plain, if this be the ſenſe of the Precept, that the Prohibition doth not extend to Caſes which belong not to the common and ordinary Converſation of Men, ſuch as the deciding of Controverſies for the ſecurity of the publick peace, the aſſuring of fidelity to the Government, and the ratifying of Leagues, *&c.* which are caſes properly excepted from this Rule of an uſual and ordinary communication with each other, becauſe they are no part thereof; but I confeſs, I do not lay the ſtreſs of the proof upon

upon this Argument only, but on this together with the ſecond, which is founded upon comparing the general Rule with the particular inſtances, whereby the uſe of it is explained, *neither by Heaven, for it's God's Throne, &c.* Our Saviour's deſign in theſe words cannot be better underſtood, than by conſidering what thoſe corrupt Principles concerning the matter of Swearing were, which had crept in among the *Jews*; and firſt, as their own Authors tell us, it was generally held amongſt them, that they ought not to Swear by the Name of God in light and trivial Caſes, but they believed it was no Sin to Swear upon any occaſion by a Creature, that was a remarkable inſtance of God's Favour and Providence, as *by Heaven*, or *by the Earth*, or *by Hieruſalem*, or *by their Head*, which are the Inſtances here noted by our Saviour. Secondly, ſome of them, and particularly the *Phariſees*, taught, that the Guilt of Perjury was not incurr'd, when a falſhood was atteſted by theſe kind of Oaths, excepting only in the Caſes of Swearing *by the Gold of the Temple, and the Gift upon the Altar*; by which Oaths they acknowledged themſelves to be bound, as we find *Matth.* 23. *(i. e.)* either to ſpeak the Truth, or to the Penalty of Falſe-Swearing: Hence, I ſay, that our Saviour's words, *Swear not at all, neither by Heaven, &c.* being ſpoken to Perſons who well enough un-

derſtood the Doctrines and Practiſes of their Countreymen in this matter, could not reaſonably be thought to have any other meaning than this, That they ought not to Swear by the Creatures of God in any of thoſe Caſes, wherein it is unlawful to Swear by the Almighty himſelf, (*i. e.*) in their uſual Communication with one another: For it ſeems the *Jews* themſelves were not arrived to that inſolence, which it is ſo dreadful to think, that Chriſtians now-a-days ſhould not ſcruple, of profaning the Name of the moſt high God, by calling him at every turn to be Witneſs of their talk: And therefore our Saviour found it needleſs to forbid them Swearing by his Name, for they already believed that to be an impious thing; but he tells them, they muſt neither Swear *by Heaven*, nor by any thing elſe; as if he had ſaid, You have been allowed to liberty of Swearing as oft as you pleaſe, provided you do not uſe the Name of God himſelf; it is ordinary with you to Swear by Heaven, and Earth, and by the Temple, and your Lives and Souls, and that in thoſe Caſes wherein you rightly believe it would be a profane rudeneſs to invoke the Majeſty of God directly; *But I ſay unto you, Swear not at all*, you ſhall not henceforth take the liberty of uſing any kind of Oaths in thoſe Caſes wherein you are not to appeal to God himſelf; but upon all theſe occaſions, whatever

you

you aſſert, or whatever you promiſe, uſe the ſimplicity and plainneſs of ſome affirmation or denial. And thus our Saviour reſtrained the licentiouſneſs of thoſe common Swearers, that thought they might ſafely Swear *by Heaven*, and uſe the like Oaths at any time, and upon any occaſion; and withal corrected that abuſe which the Doctrine of the *Phariſees* had brought into this Practice, *viz.* That Men were not liable to the guilt of Perjury by ſuch Oaths as theſe were, which I ſhall more diſtinctly ſhew under the third Head. The meaning then of our Saviours Prohibition is not this, That it is unlawful at any time to Swear by the Name of God, but that it is unlawful to Swear by any Creature in any Caſe, wherein it would be ſo to appeal directly to the Knowledge and Juſtice of God himſelf.

2. As to thoſe Inſtances by which the general Rule is explained, it is obſerveable,

1. That Swearing by any of the Creatures is forbidden, not only by *Heaven and Earth*, which with the reſt are particularly mentioned by our Saviour, becauſe theſe forms of Swearing were moſt in uſe amongſt the *Jews*.

2. We are to note, that our Saviour calls it *Swearing*, to uſe theſe forms of Speech in atteſting what we ſay; they are not ſo many words loſt, as we may be enclined to think,

but we bring npon our ſelves the obligation of an Oath by the uſing of them, as ſhall preſently appear. If indeed any ways of ſpeaking have obtained amongſt us, which look like Swearing, but are not, being altogether unapt to excite any Thought of Divine Juſtice, I do not queſtion, but they are to be laid aſide too, becauſe ſurely the Prohibition of Swearing at all, excludes not only all real, but all broken, apiſh and inſignificant Oaths; but if it were not ſo, one would think that a ſmall meaſure of Sobriety and Wiſdom ſhould keep a man from debaſing and vilifying the acknowledged forms of ſpeaking that are peculiar to Oaths, by applying them to ſuch ſenſleſs ſounds, as make them to ſignify nothing: 'Tis a good Rule which a wiſe man hath given, That all forms, beſides thoſe wherein there is an immediate appeal to God, are better avoided, when there is need of Swearing, and when there is no need; we ſhould not Swear at all, neither by Heaven, nor by any thing elſe: Let us now conſider,

3. The Reaſons why the Prohibition extends to theſe inſtances, and the like, not *by Heaven, for it's God's Throne; and he that ſweareth by Heaven, ſweareth by the Throne of God, and him that ſitteth thereon*, Matth. 23. Not *by the Earth, for it is his footſtool*; it is a remarkable ſubject of his Providence; and to Swear hereby, is in effect all one as to appeal

to

to God, that upholds it by his Power: Not *by Jerusalem*, nor any holy place that hath a peculiar relation to God for the same reason; nor *by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black*, (*i. e.*) thou hast no power over thy life, and art so unable to subsist independently upon God, that thou canst not so much as alter the colour of thine Hair: Now since thy Head, thy Life and Safety depends upon the Divine Providence, to Swear by thy Head, and by thy Life, and consequently by thy hope of Life and Salvation, is indeed to Swear by him, upon whom thou dependest for thy life, and who only hath all power to save and to destroy; so that the general reason why these Oaths are to be avoided, is because they are equivalent to formal Swearing by the Creator of all things, and contrary to the Opinion of the *Pharisees*, brought an equal Obligation upon him that used them, with Swearing downright by our Maker: Now they acknowledged, that Swearing directly by the Name of God, and where that was used, was not lawful in their ordinary occasions of speaking, our Saviour proceeds upon this supposition, and infers therefore it is not lawful to use those other Oaths upon those occasions, because they implied an appeal to the Justice and the Omnipresence of God himself. And thus I have endeavoured to explain the Prohibition contained in this Law of Christ.

As for the Precept, *But let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay,* it needs no farther inquiry into the ſenſe of it, the plain meaning of them already appearing to be this: Content your ſelves with bare affirming and denying whatever you have occaſion to ſpeak of, without adding thereto any kind of Oaths and Imprecations.

And thus much concerning the Law it ſelf, which one would think were as eaſy to be practiſed, as it is to be underſtood; and certainly it is great pity that any man ſhould need much perſwaſion to keep it; but if it ſhould be ſo, we do not want Arguments clear and ſtrong enough to prevail with any conſidering Perſon; and theſe are contained in the Sanction of this Law, which is the ſecond thing I am to ſpeak to, and which I have already told you is founded,

1. Upon the Authority of our Bleſſed Lord and Saviour.
2. Upon the reaſon of the Law it ſelf.

1. The Authority of our Saviour, who eſtabliſhed this Law by theſe words, *But I ſay unto you.* I do not find any ſuch expreſs Prohibition of Swearing in ordinary Converſation as this, before our Saviours time; not but that I think the unlawfulneſs of that liberty which here he abridgeth his Diſciples of,

of, might by good conſequence be inferred from the Writings of *Moſes*, and the Prophets; but what need we look for any other Rule in this matter, beſides this which is ſo plain and expreſs, and which we have received from the Son of God himſelf; there can now be no diſpute, whether we may lawfully Swear in thoſe Caſes wherein an Oath is needleſs; for our Lord's Command is ſo full againſt it, that a queſtion hath been made, though upon no juſt ground, Whether it be lawful for a Chriſtian to Swear at all; now if the ſenſe of our Saviour's Authority can prevail with us to do any thing in obedience to him, it will not fail to govern us in this matter, where the performance of his will is ſo eaſy, and the violation of it is not rewarded by any gain or pleaſure, nor ſollicited by any Temptation that can faſten upon our ſenſual Luſts and Appetites; nor can be reſolved eaſily into any other Cauſe, but a Spirit of Contradiction to the Goſpel of our Lord; which may make us aſtoniſhed, that in an Age pretending to the Worſhip of God, in a Nation formed into a Chriſtian Church, ſo many ſhould be found of almoſt all Qualities and Degrees, who bid defiance to the Authority of our Saviour, by refuſing to make ſo ſmall an acknowledgment of it, as the keeping of a Law ſo eaſy, as this, that we ſhould thus put into our Diſcourſe a peculiar Character to let the

World

World know, that we are no Chriſtians, though we were Baptized into the Name of Chriſt; leaſt it ſhould not be obſerved by our practices, that we ſhould take care to diſcover it by our language, that we are none of thoſe who believe Jeſus to be the Son of God: If we had no other reaſon, but the Will of our Lord and Saviour to rule us in this matter, that certainly ſhould be enough to conclude us; he that ſhould want a farther obligation, deſerves to be ranked with Heathens and Infidels; and yet the thing which our Saviour here forbids, is evil in it ſelf too, and contains many foul and deteſtable Immoralities in its own nature; and therefore the common Swearer's Sin, how enormous muſt it needs be, who refuſeth to do a very ſmall matter to avoid ſo great a guilt! That the heinouſneſs whereof may yet farther appear, I ſhall proceed to the

Second Conſideration under this Head, *viz.* The Reaſon of the Law it ſelf, which is contained in theſe words, whatſoever is more than the plainneſs of affirmation and denial in common diſcourſe, *cometh of evil*; I will therefore endeavour theſe two following things.

1. To make it appear what thoſe evil diſpoſitions are which this practice implies.

2. To

2. To examine the pretences that are only poſſible to be alledged in excuſe of it. Now if men are led to it by no good Principle; if the diſpoſitions thereunto are wholly evil; if evil be implied in the very pretences brought to excuſe it; nothing can be farther deſired to demonſtrate that this is to be concluded, *viz.* That it is an Immorality to Swear in our Communication; and whatſoever is more than that ſimplicity of Language which our Saviours Rule confines us to, *cometh of evil.*

The true Principles and Cauſes enclining men to this practice, are theſe.

1. Want of Reverence towards God.
2. Careleſneſs of avoiding the Crime of Perjury.
3. Immodeſty and Pride.
4. Lightneſs and vanity of mind. And indeed there muſt be all theſe things together to make up a common Swearer; for if he either had reverent Thoughts of God, or feared to be Forſworn; or if he had but a little modeſty and good manners, or any tolerable meaſure of a ſteddy and ſerious ſpirit, any one of theſe things would ſecure him.

1. Cuſtomary Swearing betrays great irreverence towards God; for unleſs a man had very mean and diſhonourable Thoughts of

of God, how durſt he make ſo bold with him, as to affirm nothing ſo ſilly, and tranſact nothing ſo trivial and mean, but he muſt ſummon God to be his Witneſs? Reverence of the Deity is always expreſſed by ſeparating holy things from vile and common uſes; and becauſe an Oath is an appeal to the Knowledge and Juſtice of God, it is greater rudeneſs to preſs it to unneceſſary Services, than it would be for the meaneſt of People to call the King out of his Throne to hear every idle Tale they brought againſt one another. If an Oath be an holy thing, let us uſe it as we do thoſe holy places, which we do not put to all Imployments, but reſerve them for their peculiar uſe. What a contempt of Religion would it be for men to bring their Markets into the Houſe of God, and pretend to ſanctify their worldly Affairs and Pleaſures, by tranſacting them in the place of his Worſhip? I do not ſee but 'tis altogether as irreligious to mix our talk with Oaths upon every occaſion; for hereby we make as cheap with God, as by proſtituting any other Sacred thing to a common and trivial uſe.

2. It argues a man not to fear that horrid Crime of Perjury; for if he were afraid of it, how cautious and deliberate would he be, e're he ventured to affirm any thing upon Oath? He would conſider whether it were exactly true, whether it were certain,

or

or only probable; whether he was not liable to miſtake, or miſinformation, in the caſe, and many other things which are often neceſſary to come under conſideration with that man that trembles at the thought of Perjury; but the light is not more clear at mid-day, than that common Swearers trouble themſelves with none of theſe Thoughts; what they ſay at a venture, they boldly Swear; what they raſhly utter, they as raſhly add Oaths and Curſes to; their habit of Swearing makes them not one jot the more wary in their talk; and the ſlipperineſs of their Tongues, not at all the more afraid of an Oath; which is a plain Argument, that they have little apprehenſion of Perjury, and are not afraid to be Forſworn; for I ſay, did we ever find that thoſe who are given to Swearing, are more deliberate and ſlow to ſpeak than other men? Do they weigh their words with more exactneſs? Do they refrain from looſneſs of talk, and diſſoluteneſs of Mirth and Jollity more than thoſe who are content to ſpeak upon their honeſt word? No, but on the contrary, they are uſually more free and prodigal of their diſcourſe; their words are guided with leſs conſideration and judgment, and their Tongues hang more looſly in their Heads than is obſerveable in other men; nay, it is well known, that they are then moſt plentiful of their Oaths, when they are leaſt able to govern their talk with

with diſcretion, (*i. e.*) when they are drunk either with Wine or Paſſion; and what numerous Perjuries then in all likelihood are theſe men guilty of! nay, it is not improbable but ſome of them may be Forſworn every day they riſe; for though men may pleaſe themſelves with thinking that they do but ſwear in jeſt, yet the obligation of an Oath is not to be laughed away; when men ſwear they will do this or that, which it may be, they intend not at all; or that ſuch a thing is true, which they know is falſe, they are nevertheleſs guilty of Perjury, for not minding that they are ſo, ſince a Sin ceaſeth not to be what it is, meerly by the ſtupidity of a man's Conſcience; but all that can be ſaid in this caſe is, That they are not apprehenſive of the guilt, nor afraid of the crime of Perjury, which is that Immorality, that I charge the common Swearer withal; and this St. *Auſtin* was ſo ſenſible of, that the reaſon which he aſſigns why our Saviour prohibited unneceſſary Oaths, was this, *ne perjuri ſimus*, leſt we ſhould be forſworn, which every man is in apparent danger of, who promiſcuouſly adds Oaths to his Talk, as I have already noted: And doubtleſs he that refuſeth to ſecure himſelf from Perjury that way which our Saviour hath preſcribed, declares plainly enough that he is not ſo careful againſt it, as a due ſenſe of the foulneſs of that Sin would make him; That in the buſineſs of an

Oath

Oath men are obliged to proceed with great care and deliberation, is a thing ſo plain, that I ſhould be aſhamed to go about the proving of it: And I am confident, if men would tye themſelves to weigh the Truth of every thing they affirmed, before they would venture to Swear to it, they would ſpare a great many of their Oaths; and if they found it were exactly true, they would be immediately ſenſible, that it deſerved not ſo ſolemn a confirmation, and be aſhamed of the vanity of doing ſo great a thing to no purpoſe, which is a conſideration that I ſhall by and by more particularly offer. In the mean time,

3. Needleſs Swearing argues Immodeſty and Pride, and an arrogant ſpirit. Few things are more unſeemly in a man, than to affirm every thing with confidence, and to be peremptory in all his talk, for this is to impoſe upon his Company, and leave no room for any body to be of another mind; and ſuch Companions are ſhunned by all wiſe Perſons, as being void of that modeſty and ſobriety which make men ſociable and converſible; but what ſhall we ſay to thoſe who are not only poſitive and dogmatical in their common diſcourſe, but aſſert every thing almoſt which they ſay, upon Oath? Certainly in this kind of Behaviour there is as much ill Manners towards men, as there is rudeneſs towards God; for what greater inſtance

ſtance can be given of an imperious and a peremptory temper, than to ſeal our talk with Oaths, and leave no room for another to doubt of what we ſay, under the pain of accuſing us of Perjury? A modeſt and wiſe man, when he delivers his judgment in many things, where poſſibly he might, without fear of being accuſed of Arrogance, be peremptory and concluſive, yet chuſeth to declare himſelf, with that reſervedneſs, as may invite another man to ſhew all his reaſons to the contrary, without fear of diſpleaſing him; and this we all know is a great Ornament to any man's Converſation, and of excellent uſe to maintain peace, and good will, and good correſpondence in all Societies; But light is not more contrary to darkneſs, than the cuſtom of Swearing is to this human and gentle temper; wherefore it betrays immodeſty and arrogance.

Laſtly, it proceeds alſo from great vanity and lightneſs of ſpirit, which appears in theſe two plain inſtances of it.

The firſt is, in making no difference between matters of ſerious importance and conſideration, and ſuch as are frivolous, and of little conſequence; in treating thoſe with the ſame ſpirit and behaviour, that are ſuitable only to theſe, which is an undoubted argument of childiſhneſs, and a frothy mind; this is that which the Swearer is apparently chargeable

chargeable with; for otherwiſe how could he in the ſame light humour, wherein he is delivering ſomething to make the Company laugh, preſume to prophane ſo ſacred a thing as an Oath is, by accompanying a poor ſilly Jeſt with it: Does the taking of an Oath require no more ſerioufneſs than is neceſſary to the telling of a Tale? Or can it be fit to tye ſo grave a thing to a ſentence, which if it were written down, would within an hour after, perhaps, appear hatefully ridiculous? And yet nothing is more common with thoſe that allow themſelves in this Sin.

Secondly, It is an Argument of vanity to take more pains for the confirming of what we ſay, than the thing doth at all deſerve. It is plain, that the greateſt part of our Converſation with one another by diſcourſe and correſpondence, doth not require any ſolemn confirmation of the truth of our words, much leſs the Teſtimony of an Oath; which being the greateſt ſecurity we can give, he muſt be a very light-headed Companion that will throw it away at every turn, who cannot tell what was done yeſterday, or make a Promiſe to his Friend or Acquaintance about the ordinarieſt matter, but out comes an Oath, or a Curſe, to bind his words withal: Methinks I could convince any man of ordinary ſenſe, that there is that levity and madneſs implied in this cuſtom, which if it were but ſeen in other things, would bring a man

within the danger of *Bedlam*; for ſuppoſe a man were to make a Promiſe to his Friend of that kind which ordinarly happens in our Converſation, as that he would give him a Viſit, or a Meeting where he ſhould appoint, but for the preſent would not ſuffer him to go, till he had gotten an hundred of his Neighbours together to be Witneſſes of his Promiſe; what a ridiculous Fancy would this be? And if a man ſhould ordinarily do thus, he were likely enough to be beg'd, if any thing were to be gotten by it; for nothing is more plain, than that the ordinary aſſurance of a man's word is ſufficient for theſe matters, and will either paſs for them, or he had as good be baniſhed out of human Society, or ſent to ſome other place at leaſt, where being not ſo well known, he may be the better truſted; but 'tis as clear as when the *Sun* ſhines, that he that will not make ſuch a Promiſe under an Oath, nor let his Word go without calling God to witneſs it, by invoking his Juſtice and Vengance if he falſifies, (for that's the meaning of an Oath) he does really ten thouſand times more to confirm his Promiſe, than if he had ſummoned Town and Countrey together, than if he had gotten all Mankind, nay, and all the Angels in Heaven together to be Witneſſes between him and his Neighbour. Can there readily be a more ridiculous vanity thought of than this, to give away the beſt

ſecurity

ſecurity I can afford of my fidelity, upon every trifle? I wiſh all thoſe who have been guilty of this Sin, would ſo endeavour after an ordinary Reputation amongſt men, as to be aſhamed of it for the future.

Thus have I ſhown what thoſe evil Principles are from whence Swearing in ordinary Converſation proceeds. It comes of irreverence towards God, careleſneſs of being Forſworn, Immodeſty and Arrogance, Lightneſs and Vanity of ſpirit; that is to ſay, if a man hath either the fear of God, or a deteſtation of Perjury, or Modeſty, and a good Manners or any Sobriety and Seriouſneſs, any one of theſe things will be ſufficient to keep him from uſing needleſs Oaths, and therefore the common Swearer is deſtitute of them all; and conſequently it muſt needs be a foul Immorality, which groweth out of a Complexion of all thoſe evil Principles that are contrary to theſe good and virtuous diſpoſitions.

I am in the

Second place, to examine the pretences that are only poſſible to be alledged in the excuſe, or for the mitigation of this Crime; and if I can ſhew, that evil is implied in theſe alſo, the concluſion will yet be more evident, that whatſoever in our ordinary Converſation is beyond affirmation and denial, *cometh of evil.* I do not think that any excuſes will be heard

for that man who goes on in any known ſin, much leſs in his behalf who lives in the violation of ſo plain and eaſy a Law as this which forbids common *Swearing*; but becauſe there are many given to this ſin, who are ready to excuſe themſelves preſently when they are admoniſhed, and to ask your pardon, if you ſeem to be offended and grieved, and then think that they have given you reaſonable ſatisfaction, as they hope they have done the like to God, by confeſſing that truly they ought not to ſwear in this faſhion, and God forgive them for it, but yet they go on ſtill to do the ſame thing; one would think there were ſome notable Temptation to this ſin, which would go very far to extenuate the guilt of it, and which rendred the avoiding of it ſo very difficult, that all the regard which could reaſonably be expected to be given to that Law of God which forbids it, is to confeſs our fault, and cry God's mercy every time we commit it; and that a good natur'd man ought to be very well ſatisfied with the acknowledgment. I have already ſhewn, that this is a Sin which ſtands in need of an excuſe as much as any: I ſhall now ſhew, that there is none leſs capable of an excuſe, by examining what is uſually pretended for it. I never heard that any Swearer ever fancied his Oaths to be for his Health, or his Wealth; that they prolong his Life, or encreaſe his Eſtate; that they

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give the Wine a brisker flavour, or bring the Gameſter any good luck; that they eaſe him of his pains, or ſet off his Pleaſures. I ſuppoſe you are all ſenſible, that theſe pretences would be very ridiculous, and truly they are not much better that follow; as,

Firſt of all, That they are an Ornament to a man's diſcourſe; that they ſet off his language; and if they are well placed, they make a ſentence run the better. I ſhould have been aſhamed to mention this excuſe, but that they ſay it goes a great way with ſome people. Now this very excuſe betrays Fantaſticalneſs, and Pride, and comes of a fooliſh affectation to be counted a Wit, which every body almoſt knows to be an argument of a mean and degenerate ſpirit; the reaſon why at any time Oaths and profane Talk are affected for this purpoſe, is, becauſe they are ſometimes obſerved to ſurprize the Hearers, which makes the profane Perſon conceit that his Wit is acknowledged, when in truth it is only the extravagance and boldneſs of his Talk that is wondered at. Folly, that is ſomething out of the road, is more commonly apt to provoke laughter, than a ſurprizal that is truly ingenious; and therefore for a man to have an Opinion of himſelf, meerly becauſe he is able to make the Company ſtare upon him, ariſeth from nothing but a mixture of Pride and Ignorance: As to this particular

matter of Swearing, it is plain that an Oath ſignifies only to the affirming or denying of what is ſaid, but adds nothing to the weight of the ſenſe, or to the ſtile wherein it is expreſt; it may ſtartle a modeſt man, but it cannot pleaſe any wiſe man, becauſe it neither mends the matter, nor helps the phraſe. But it is not ſtrange, that that ſhould go for Wit, which the very baſeſt of the People can make uſe of with as much freedom and diſcretion, and with as good a grace as a man of the beſt quality and breeding can do? for the truth is, there is nothing required to this kind of pleaſantneſs, but to get ones forhead furniſhed with Impudence: which if the meaneſt Peaſant be capable of, he is then qualified for a good Companion, meerly by having a memory large enough to take in half a dozen Oaths, and a Tongue in his Head to uſe them as occaſion ſerves; which, experience ſhows, may be done, without any natural Sagacity, or Rules of Art.

2. It is ſometimes pretended by common Swearers, though I think but rarely, That men will not believe them without an Oath: and what is this but to confeſs, they have been ſo notoriouſly given to Lying, that no body dares truſt them upon their bear word? for a man that is known to make conſcience of ſpeaking the Truth, finds no difficulty of creating a belief of what he ſays amongſt any of his Friends, without making any appeal

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to God. Beſides the Oath of a common Swearer, gives indeed but very little aſſurance of the truth of what he ſays; if I know a man to be afraid of an Oath, his Oath ſhall ſatisfy me beyond any other teſtimony that he can give; and upon the Oath of ſuch a man, a Court of Judicature may proceed with confidence; but what regard can reaſonably be had to his Oath above his ſimple and bare word, as we uſe to ſay, who is known to ſwear upon all occaſions? if he does not lie, 'tis well, but of this I have no peculiar aſſurance by his Oath, becauſe it is as ordinary with him to ſwear, as to ſpeak; and therefore in *Athens*, a Common Swearer's Oath was not allowed, nor accepted of in their Courts; and ſometimes the teſtimony of a man of known Probity and Honour was admitted without it; this laſt ſeems to be imitated by the wiſdom of our Laws, which ſuppoſe the Aſſeveration of a Peer to be equivalent to the Oath of another man; and therefore for another man to Swear needleſly, is to diſparage the Reputation of his Fidelity; but for a man of Honour to do ſo, is to renounce his Priviledge; and for any man to do thus, is not only to bring the honeſty of his Word, but the truth of his Oath alſo into queſtion.

3. The moſt uſual excuſe framed for the extenuation of this Impiety, is that of ſudden Paſſion; thus when ſome men are a little

provoked, or when they are ſurprized with ſome unexpected good Fortune, or any unlook'd-for miſadventure befals them, either their Rage or their Joy burſts out preſently into Oaths, and they pretend they cannot help it; for they have no other way to diſcharge their minds, and give vent to their Paſſions, but by Curſing and Swearing; now is not this a plain confeſſion, that they have loſt the government of themſelves, and *have no rule over their own ſpirits*? So common it is for men, while they are framing an excuſe for one ſin, to betray themſelves guilty of another; what greater argument can lightly be given of an impotent mind, than that every petty accident is able to bereave one of all conſideration, and make him ceaſe to be his own man till the fit is over? And the truth is, though Paſſion be brought in to mitigate the buſineſs, yet it is plain enough, that any trifling occaſion is able to ſet theſe men a ſwearing, that make this excuſe for themſelves; when provocation is alledged to mollify this Crime, one would think it muſt ariſe from no leſs a cauſe than if he ſhould find his houſe in flames, or his friend attempting the honour of his bed; but upon examination, this ſame emotion and heat of ſpirit, is pleaded for the begging of your pardon, when a man ſwears upon the moſt trifling and inconſiderable occaſions: And what can excuſe that childiſhneſs and impo-

impotency of mind to which theſe men have thus given themſelves over? But let never ſuch extraordinary cauſes of joy, or grief, or anger happen, it is an unmanly thing to ſet no bounds to theſe Paſſions, and they are never leſs unbridled, than when we make ſuch undue expreſſions of them, as Oaths and Curſes are; St. *James* gives us this Rule, *Above all things, my brethren, ſwear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, nor by any other Oath, James* 5. 12. But the particular Caſe wherein he thought this Rule was uſeful, was that of Affliction, for he had before exhorted them to whom he wrote, to *take the Prophets for an example of ſuffering affliction, and of patience*, and particularly recommended to them the meekneſs and patience of *Job* for their imitation, *ver.* 10, 11. But if they could not perfectly equal ſuch great examples as thoſe were, yet at leaſt he ſtrictly enjoins them not to be tranſported ſo far into Anger and Impatience as to break forth into Oaths: *But above all things, my brethren, ſwear not*, but keep your ſelves within the bounds of modeſt and Chriſtian Language; and that they might ſee that he allowed them to have a ſenſe of the good and evil of this World, and was far from thinking it a Virtue to be ſtupid, and dull, and unconcerned about either the Comforts, or the Calamities of human Life; he directs them how they may convert the Paſſions which

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are thereby excited, to an excellent and profitable uſe; *Is any man among you afflicted? let him pray; Is any merry? let him ſing Pſalms, ver.* 13, 15. If any man be overtaken with worldly miſery, let him turn himſelf to more devout and earneſt Prayer, that God would either remove his burden, or give him patience under it; if he be ſurprized with ſome new bleſſing, let him break forth into the Praiſes of God, to whoſe Bounty and Goodneſs he ſtands obliged for it. Thus to improve the excitations of joy and grief within us, is a demonſtration that our Paſſions have not overwhelmed our Reaſon and Underſtanding, but left us the free uſe of our ſelves, to do what becomes us as Men and Chriſtians; but in either caſe to laſh out into Oaths, is a plain token of an impotent mind, that hath no rule over it ſelf, but is hurried away by intemperate Paſſions, which is matter of ſo much ſhame to a reaſonable Creature, and much more to a Diſciple of Chriſt, that we ſhould bluſh to confeſs ſo much evil againſt our ſelves, as to make it the excuſe of any other Sin.

4. If Swearing be excuſed under the notion of a compliance with the cuſtom of other men who are our Friends and Companions; this pretence indeed carries a ſhew of civility and kind nature; but for all that, is the fillieſt that can readily be thought of, and the making of it argues a mean and degene-

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rate mind; for although in things of an innocent and indifferent nature, 'tis commendable for men to remit of their own way and humour, and to ſuit themſelves to the cuſtoms and manners of thoſe whom they converſe with, yet to be complaiſant in all things without exception, is the way to grow as profligate and vile as the Devil would wiſh any man to be; for what wickedneſs could want Authority, if this pretence were once admitted? What is this but to proclaim that a man hath loſt all ſenſe of difference between good and evil? And that he hath left off to judge all things according to their own nature; that he hath no more uſe left for his Reaſon; that his Conſcience is no longer in his own keeping, and that he is now fit to herd with the Beaſts that follow the foremoſt without diſcretion. The Laws of Truth and Goodneſs are immutable; and another man's violation of them, gives me no diſpenſation to do ſo too; I may not proſtitute my Conſcience to the Luſts of other men, who are to be governed by the Laws of God as well as I; if they call my reſolution not to provoke my Maker, an humour, in this matter I were a Fool not to be tenacious of my own humour; in this caſe there can be no reaſon why he that is in the right, ſhould go over to him that is wrong, unleſs he that ſets the evil example could change the nature of things, and made evil not to be evil, and ſin

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and puniſhment to be other things than what they are.

Laſtly, The common way of excuſing raſh Oaths, by pleading an habit, implieth the greateſt evil of this nature that can be; for this is but to confeſs that a man is guilty of this ſin in the higheſt degree, an evil cuſtom being the heighth of wickedneſs.

Thus both by ſhewing what thoſe diſpoſitions are which lead to common Swearing, and by conſidering the excuſes that are uſually framed in the behalf of it, I have diſcovered the Immorality thereof, and that it *cometh of evil.*

I might here add the Authority of wiſe men, who had no particular Revelation, to guide themſelves by, and yet condemned this practice, and diſſwaded all men from it; for theſe Perſons could diſcover the evil of it only by the light of Natural Reaſon, which they could not have done, if it had not been evil in its own nature. *Plato* wrote ſmartly againſt Swearing upon light cauſes; *Hierocles* tells us, It is a diſhonour to truth to confirm it lightly with an Oath. *Epictetus* gives this advice, Avoid Swearing altogether, if thou canſt, if not, as much as thou canſt. In a word, The wiſe and ſober Heathens were generally of this mind, That an Oath was to be reſerved for Caſes of neceſſity; and the practice of common Swearing was not in uſe amongſt any but Stage-players

players and Slaves; nor do we ordinarly meet with Oaths in any of their Writers, excepting the Comedians, and ſome of their diſſolute Poets; but the grave men and Philoſophers took not the liberty themſelves, and dehorted others from it. And this may ſerve to confirm us in the belief of its Immorality; for what ſo many wiſe men agreed in condemning, ſeems to be condemn'd as evil, by reaſons common to all men, and poſſibly ſuch as I have offered to your conſideration; ſo great a ſhame and ignominy it is to Chriſtians to allow themſelves in a Cuſtom ſo eaſy avoidable; that is condemned by the light of Nature, however by the Authority of the Son of God, whoſe Diſciples we profeſs our ſelves to be.

Thus have I finiſhed what I had to ſay upon this ſubject, having been willing to ſay all that was any way proper to oppoſe a cuſtom tending ſo manifeſtly to the diſhonour of our Nation, and the diſcredit of our Church, and the ſcandal of Chriſtian Society, and finally, to the ruin of Mens Souls for ever; for without univerſal obedience to the Laws of Chriſt, whereof this is one which I have been preaching to you, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; for which reaſon if I had choſen any other command of our Lord and Saviour to diſcourſe upon, I had been as vehement in urging you

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to the obedience of that, as I have been in preſſing this.

Now the God of mercy grant that we may walk before him blameleſs, and be holy in all manner of Converſation as becomes the followers of Jeſus; To Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit be aſcribed all honour, praiſe, and glory, now, and for ever. Amen.

The

The Tenth Sermon.

MATTH. VII. 21.

Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven.

THE Point determined in theſe words is of the higheſt concernment to us in the world, *viz.* Who of thoſe that hope for Salvation by Chriſt ſhall not, and who *ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* The former is deſcribed in that part of the Text, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord*; The latter in the cloſe of it, *But he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Let us firſt conſider the former part, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord*; which being compared with the Clauſe oppoſed to it, is evidently to be thus interpreted; Not any one that ſaith, Lord, Lord, and does no more than ſay ſo, but neglects the doing of God's Will, not any ſuch perſon ſhall enter into the King-

dom

dom of Heaven: By calling Chriſt *Lord*, is meant an open profeſſion of Chriſtianity; and by calling him, *Lord, Lord*, is meant a *vehement* profeſſion of it, ſuch a Profeſſion as is to be ſeen in all the ways of making known to the World what Religion we are of. For inſtance, When we do not only not renounce our Baptiſm, and ſuffer our ſelves to be called Chriſtians, and call our ſelves ſo, which is common to the moſt careleſs Profeſſors of Chriſtianity in the World; but when alſo we do ſolemnly confeſs that Faith in the Aſſemblies of the Church into which we have been baptized, and frequent the Table of Our Lord to *ſhew forth his death*, and join in publick Prayers, and are zealous for the purity of Chriſtian Profeſſion, and contend againſt Error, then we are thoſe that call Chriſt *Lord, Lord*, (i. e.) who make a vehement profeſſion, that we are his Servants and Followers: Now whereas our Saviour ſays, *Not every one that doth this, ſhall enter into the kingdom of Heaven*, the plain meaning is, That he doth not exclude this outward profeſſion as *unneceſſary*, but that he makes it inſufficient of it ſelf in order to ſalvation.

1. He doth by no means exclude it as unneceſſary, or as a Condition that may well enough be ſpared, he ſaid upon another occaſion, *Ye call me Maſter and Lord, and ye ſay well, for*

for ſo I am, John 13. 13. And St. *Paul* tells us, That as *with the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs*, ſo *with the mouth confeſſion is made to ſalvation*, Rom. 10. 10. Nay, it is ſo neceſſary, if we will be ſaved, to confeſs Chriſt and his Truth publickly in the World, that no danger will excuſe us from it: For the doing of this, if need be, we muſt venture all that is deareſt to us in this life, nay, and life it ſelf: It was on this account that our Saviour told his Diſciples, *Whoever will come after me, muſt take up his croſs, and follow me.* It is the confeſſion of the true Faith added to holy living that hath made Martyrs of Saints: ſince it was properly for confeſſing Chriſt with their mouths, for contending in the behalf of Truth againſt Error, for ſerving God in Religious Aſſemblies according to the Goſpel, for their common Prayers and Worſhip, for celebrating the Holy Communion, and for doing all thoſe things in which the outward profeſſion of true Chriſtianity ſtands, that they laid down their lives, and have been *tormented* many of them, *not accepting deliverance*; and therefore our Saviour, who here ſays, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter*, &c. hath alſo ſaid, *Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him ſhall the ſon of man alſo confeſs before the angels of God*; *But he that denieth me before men, ſhall be denied before the angels*

of God, Luke 12. 8, 9. So that although confeſſing Chriſt be not of it ſelf enough for ſalvation, yet it is always neceſſary to it; and ſometimes it is of that force, that one may conclude nothing elſe is wanting, and that is, when we confeſs with great hazard to our ſelves in this World. But one reaſon why 'tis ſometimes ſo exceedingly praiſe-worthy, and ſignifies all other neceſſary qualities, is becauſe it is always a duty; for if it were in it ſelf but indifferent, and might be omitted without breach of our duty to God, it were a fooliſh thing not to omit it, when our own ſafety and welfare in this World required us to forbear. In a word, Confeſſion with the mouth, aſſembling our ſelves together for Prayer, Baptiſm, and the celebration of the Holy Communion, and every other part of outward Religion, in which the profeſſion of Chriſtianity ſtands, are all of them required in the Scriptures; which we are not to wonder at, ſince it is evident, that the Honour of God, that Charity to men, and the Intereſt and maintenance of Chriſtianity, do require it alſo.

1. The Honour of God doth plainly require it; for if it be fit and neceſſary that God ſhould be honoured by us (*i. e.*) confeſſed, praiſed, and prayed unto, who doth not ſee, that all this ought to be done not only in private ſingly, but in publick jointly,

ly, unleſs one ſhould think, that we have Reaſon and Speech given to us for tranſacting common Affairs of the leaſt moment, and not of the greateſt, *viz.* thoſe which concern our dependance upon God, and our ſubjection to him: Hence it is that *David* in the Pſalms called his Tongue *his glory*, becauſe he did therewith praiſe, and confeſs, and glorify God amongſt men. And in the *New Teſtament* we are not only exhorted to glorify God with our Mind, but with our Mouth too. Nor can any thing be more plain at firſt ſight, than that without this, it is impoſſible that God ſhould be honoured, as it is moſt fit he ſhould be in the Societies of Mankind. And,

2. The outward profeſſion of Religion is no leſs requiſite to the good of the World, to which we in charity are to contribute what we can: For there is nothing more neceſſary for the common welfare of Mankind, than a ſenſe of God and Religion, which although it has its foundation in our very Natures, yet as many other natural Inclinations, may be ſtrangely weakned, and in danger to be loſt, if it be not ſupported by uſe and exerciſe; and what is there more neceſſary for the maintaining of a common ſenſe of Religion, than a common profeſſion of it? And therefore in a matter of ſo great moment as this is, every man ought to be an Example to his Neighbour,

and all men ſhould encourage and animate one another: Nor can any one ſingle perſon withdraw from the profeſſion of Religion, but in ſo doing he grows an enemy to Mankind, and as much as in him lies, he teaches others to be ſo too. But then,

3. Above all, The intereſt and maintenance of Chriſtianity requires a publick profeſſion of it: For Chriſtianity doth not only conſiſt in the belief of ſuch and ſuch Doctrines, but in meeting together alſo for the Worſhip of God according to them, which is the moſt comprehenſive inſtance of outward profeſſion; for when our Lord inſtituted a Church, and his Apoſtles did afterward gather men to it, nothing could be more plain, than that he made a profeſſion of his Doctrine, and the outward Service of God according to his Goſpel, a part of Chriſtianity; for without this, it is impoſſible that Believers ſhould be a Body or a Society, as they are: And therefore that man that lives without Chriſtian Communion, or which is all one, without Chriſtian Profeſſion, cannot rightly be called a Chriſtian, but hath rather renounced his Baptiſm, by declaring in effect, that although he was admitted by Baptiſm into the Body of Chriſt's Church, yet now he will have nothing to do with it: But if the ſecret belief of the Doctrine of Chriſt, without any appearance of Profeſſion of it, were enough to make a man a Chriſtian,

ſtian, as I think it is not, yet ſuch a perſon would deſerve very ill of Chriſtianity to conceal his belief; for it is by our profeſſion of it, that it muſt be upheld in the World, and propagated amongſt thoſe that do not yet receive it; and he that diſſembles his Faith, doth therefore his part, and gives his conſent, that the True Religion ſhould fail from among the Children of men. And there is no doubt, but that amongſt other Reaſons, the Goſpel requires, that Believers ſhould profeſs their Faith, and be a viſible Communion of Worſhippers, that ſo the Doctrine and worſhip of the Goſpel might be upheld and maintained in the World. The truth is, there is that wickedneſs amongſt men, that ſo holy a Doctrine as that of our Saviour's will not be readily entertained; and there is that folly and ſuperſtition every-where, that ſo reaſonable and excellent a Worſhip, as that which the Goſpel preſcribes, is not apt to take with moſt people; and for this reaſon, Error and Superſtition are things that men will run into of themſelves. When therefore our Lord brought into the World the knowledge of Divine Truth, and of the way how God would be worſhipped and ſerved, he did therefore make his Diſciples a Society of men profeſſing the way of Truth and Purity, that his Doctrine might ſpread in the World, and keep all the ground it ſhould gain by every man's making profeſ-

ſion of the common Faith: For which reaſon *Origen* thought, that when Our Saviour ſaid, *Upon this rock will I build my Church*, he meant by *the rock* every Chriſtian that ſhould do as *St. Peter* had done, (*i. e.*) who ſhould make open confeſſion of that Truth which St. *Peter* confeſſed, becauſe the Profeſſion of every Chriſtian did ſomething to ſupport the Intereſt of the Goſpel in the World.

A great many more things might be ſaid to this purpoſe, to ſhew, that what is meant here by ſaying unto Chriſt, *Lord, Lord*, (*i. e.*) an outward profeſſion of true Chriſtianity, is ſo far from being an indifferent thing, that it is a moſt neceſſary duty, ſtanding upon plain Commands and plain Reaſons; nay, ſo neceſſary, that without it we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; no, though it ſhould bring never ſo much trouble upon us in this World, and therefore to be ſure when it brings little or none at all: And upon this account it had doubtleſs been a true ſaying, if it had been ſaid, Not every one that in other things doth the Will of my Father, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that alſo ſaith unto me, *Lord, Lord* (i. e.) who doth moreover make an outward profeſſion of being my Diſciple: This, I ſay, had been true, but then it had not been ſo inſtructing and uſeful an Admonition as it is in the Text, becauſe it is incom-

comparably more certain, that he who doth the Will of God in all other things, will outwardly profeſs the truth of the Goſpel, than that every one who doth profeſs it, will live according to it. And therefore our Saviour laid his Caution, where the danger was; and ſo I come to the

2*d.* Point, That an outward profeſſion of Chriſtianity, is not of it ſelf ſufficient in order to our Salvation, inaſmuch as it is moreover neceſſary, that we ſhould do the Will of God (*i. e.*) that we ſhould do his Will in all other things; and in general, that our Affections and Practices ſhould be anſwerable to the truth we profeſs, which is a thing ſo plain, if we once come ſeriouſly to conſider it, that there is as little need of proof to make it out, as one would think there was of this Caution of our Saviour, not to truſt in outward profeſſion, when our hearts and lives are contrary to what we profeſs: What is a profeſſed Chriſtian, but one that declares himſelf to believe, That the unrighteous, the unmerciful, the unclean, the ungodly, ſhall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; one that declares to the World, that his chief buſineſs is to be ſaved, and that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord:* And therefore whilſt himſelf lives in ungodlineſs, and is led away by worldly Luſts, he is the moſt abſurd perſon in the World, and ſo much more ridiculous, than a man that has

skill in any thing but the proper buſineſs of his Calling by which he muſt live, as the Concerns of another World are above all our Intereſts in this: For ſuch a man to maintain the hope of Everlaſting Life, is a contradiction to his own Faith and Profeſſion, ſuch a contradiction to his Profeſſion, that he expoſes himſelf to have the lie given him by the World; ſuch a contradiction to his Faith, that his own Conſcience one would think ſhould give him the lie too: But yet as plain a caſe as it is, that meer profeſſion, without doing the Will of God, is not enough to ſave us; our Saviour nevertheleſs thought fit here and elſewhere plainly to admoniſh us of it, that we might not deceive our ſelves: And the Apoſtle foretold, there would be men having *a form of godlineſs, and denying the power thereof*; and therefore it ſhould ſeem, that how plain ſoever the miſtake is of truſting to profeſſion without a practice anſwerable to it, yet men would be very apt to fall into that miſtake.

There are theſe two things, which I ſhall hereupon take occaſion to ſpeak to.

1. That Experience has proved the proneneſs of Mankind to this folly of preſuming upon mere profeſſion, that God is pleaſed with them.

2. What are the cauſes and occaſions of ſo wretched a conceit, ſo void of all ſhadow or pretence to reaſon.

1. As

1. As to the proof of it, that it has been ſo, I ſhall need to inſiſt but little upon it, becauſe, alas, the thing is too apparent in our own days, and every man that is guilty has a teſtimony of it from his own Conſcience, if he will hearken to it, too plain to be denied: Our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf found a great deal of this folly and madneſs among the *Jews*, eſpecially amongſt the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, when he came into the World: Their Fathers had for 400 years been cured of Idolatry, and the fondneſs of the gods of their Neighbours round about them; they had ſmarted too ſeverely for that, ever to return to it again: But they ſoon fell to make the Profeſſion and Worſhip of God according to the Law, a diſpenſation for Luxury and Injuſtice, and Unmercifulneſs and wicked living, inſtead of a reſtraint from it; plainly ſhewing thereby, that their Fathers did not like the True Religion, becauſe it was too good for them, ſince their Poſterity not daring to revolt from the outward profeſſion of it, yet ſoon learned to reconcile it with a licentious practice. Nay, if we will take St. *Paul*'s word, who did not uſe to reprove without cauſe, they thought that the ſame ſins which they were guilty of with the *Gentiles*, would not have ſo bad a conſtruction made of them, nor be ſo diſpleaſing to God, as they were in the *Gentiles*. For as it appears from *Rom.* 2.

they

they judged the *Gentiles* for doing evil things, and did them themſelves, thinking all the while to *eſcape the righteous judgment of God*: And what was the reaſon of all this? They had the Temple of God amongſt them: the Promiſes made to *Abraham* and to his Poſterity; God's Service according to the Law, of *Moſes*, Sacrifices according to the Law, and Waſhings, and divers Ordinances, in the obſervation of which they put their truſt, and believed that no *Iſraelite* ſhould go without his portion of happineſs in the life to come: In this ſtate our *Saviour* found them; they truſted in *Moſes*, and ſaid, *we have Abraham to our Father*, they built and garniſhed the Tombs of the Prophets, thoſe very Prophets that had been ſo ill entertained by their Forefathers for declaring againſt their ſins; and becauſe they did this external honour to the Monuments of thoſe good men, they excuſed themſelves from following their Inſtructions, being full of hypocriſy and iniquity, and all uncleanneſs. Now this being ſo notorious in our *Saviour's* time, and having been ſo for ſome Ages before, it ſeemed needful that his Diſciples ſhould be warned againſt the like fatal miſtakes, into which there was no little reaſon to be jealous they would fall: For by how much a greater Perſon Jeſus was than *Moſes*, and his Sacrifice more excellent than the Sacrifices of the Law, and his Religion a more rational and per-

perfect Religion, than any that had been before, ſo much greater danger there might be, leaſt men ſhould truſt to their relation to Chriſt, and to the Sacrifice of Chriſt, and to the profeſſion of the Faith of Chriſt, without an holy heart and life: If the *Jews* could ſay, *We have Abraham to our Father*, and this were enough to quiet their guilty fears; it was to be feared Chriſtians would ſay, We have Chriſt Jeſus our Lord and Maſter, our Deliverer and Saviour, and make the ſame uſe of it: If they truſted in *Moſes*, there was ſome reaſon to ſuſpect that others would hereafter lay hold upon Chriſt, and think themſelves ſafe enough by making their boaſt of him, no leſs than the *Jews* had done before of *Moſes*, and conſequently great reaſon for this earneſt admonition, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord*, &c. Nay,

2. Notwithſtanding this and the like forewarnings, yet men have, and do in this manner delude themſelves; inaſmuch as our Saviour upon this occaſion told his Diſciples before hand, *Many ſhall ſay unto me in that day, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name, and in thy name caſt out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?* which certainly was ſpoken of thoſe Workers of Iniquity that lived in the early days of the Church, whilſt Mirales were yet continued in it: And this was a terrible inſtance of the prone-

proneneſs of men to fall into this kind of preſumption; That ſome of them who did not only hear, but preach the Goſpel of Chriſt; who did not only ſee, but do Miracles in the name of Chriſt, ſhould yet be *workers of iniquity*; that they who had faith to *caſt out devils* out of others, ſhould not have faith enough to diſpoſſeſs themſelves of their vile Luſts, and to cleanſe their own hearts and ways. But when Honour, and Power, and Wealth became the Rewards of profeſſing Chriſtianity, the inſtances of this folly and madneſs grew ſtill more numerous, and more open, and men more eaſily paſſed for Chriſtians, than in former times, though they were as luſtful and revengeful, as vain and inſolent, and altogether as worldly and vicious, as other men, they then came into the Church with more eaſe, and were turned out of it with more difficulty, and they continued in it under a Diſcipline leſs ſevere than in former times; and no wonder then, that upon the encreaſe of Bad Examples, there were ſtill more and more who looked for Salvation by the Name of Chriſt, that had little or nothing of his Spirit, and were themſelves Chriſtians in nothing elſe but in name and profeſſion. And now let us conſider,

2*dly*, How it comes to paſs that men can thus deceive themſelves, as to reſt upon ſo falſe

falſe a foundation of hope and comfort, as a mere profeſſion of the Name and Religion of Chriſt, without being ſuch perſons in life and ſoul, as their profeſſion requires. Now,

1. The firſt and moſt general cauſe is this, That men are willing to be thus deceived; and no man is in greater danger of falling into a miſtake, how pernicious ſoever it be, than he that has a mind to believe it no miſtake: Our Saviour in this Sermon, whereof the Text is a part, ſpeaks againſt cauſeleſs Anger, and an adulterous Eye, and a revengeful Spirit, and Vain-glory, and Worldly ſollicitude, and a great many other things, which are often as hard to reform, as it would be to *cut off a right hand, and to pull out a right eye*, eſpecially where a corrupt Inclination is confirmed by cuſtom in ſin: This is indeed the principal cauſe why men will conceit any thing, though it be never ſo fooliſh, rather than they will feel an indiſpenſible obligation to repent and reform their wicked ways. 'Tis true, when a man has had ſome experience of it, the practice of Religion in all his converſation becomes the joy of his life; and he finds more pleaſure in a conſtant courſe of piety towards God, of juſtice and mercy towards men, of a ſober and temperate uſe of the good things of this life, than can poſſibly be had in the ways of ſin; but whilſt one is under the

power and luſt of Paſſion, his indulgence to his own Appetite, is like drink to a man in a Feaver, who, till he recovers his health, knows no other pleaſure, nor is there a greater torment to him, than to be denied it: Now they are thoſe Rules of Chriſtianity which concern the government of our Affections and Paſſions, our Manners and Practices in the general courſe of our converſation, that are directly contrary to thoſe corrupt Inclinations of Mankind; whereas the obligation to profeſs a Religion, and to worſhip God amongſt thoſe that do ſo, doth not of it ſelf thwart them, otherways than it brings the other part of Religion to mind, which is, to act accordingly in all our converſation: And therefore men would fain believe, that their care in one part ſhall ſupply the defects in the other; that is, That ſaying, *Lord, Lord*, ſhall ſtand them in good ſtead, although they do not the will of our heavenly Father. To this we may add,

2. That there is as great a difficulty on the other ſide to throw off all fear of God, and all concern for a Life to come, as there is to come up throughly to that which Religion requires. And we have infinite reaſon to bleſs God for this difficulty, (*i. e.*) that he hath made it, I will not only ſay as difficult, but more difficult, for us to become mere Atheiſts and Infidels, than even bad men have made it to become true and ſincere Chriſtians: For he

he hath left thoſe natural impreſſions of his own Being upon our hearts, and hath given ſuch evidence to the World of the truth of the Goſpel of his Son, that it muſt needs be an hard thing for us to grow downright Atheiſts, or even Unbelievers; and for the moſt part, do what we can, we are held under the ſenſe and awe of Religion; and if we will make an evil courſe of life eaſy to our ſelves, it muſt not be done by throwing off all pretence to Religion; for then we ſhould be ſelf-condemned without any relief, and have nothing at all to truſt to; but it muſt be done by putting ſome cheat upon our ſelves, conſiſtent with the profeſſion of Religion; that is, by flattering our ſelves, that a diligent profeſſion of it will ſerve the turn; and they are theſe two things taken together, *viz.* the unwillingneſs of men to leave their ſins on the one ſide, and the unavoidable apprehenſions of God, and a Life to come, and a general conviction of the truth of Chriſtianity on the other, that have not only made many Perſons take up this falſe way of comforting themſelves, but have alſo made them eaſy to receive divers Errors which help to ſupport this, to expect ſpiritual relief from things bleſt by man, without any appointment from God, and to place Religion in things which have neither reaſon of their own, nor Divine Authority to make them valuable. Certainly if it were either

either eaſy for Mankind to throw off all pretence to Religion on the one hand, or if they could eaſily be perſuaded to break off their ſins by repentance on the other, it had been a much harder thing to corrupt Religion, than Experience has ſhewn it to be: But ſo long as there will be Conſcience, and a ſenſe of God, and an apprehenſion of a life to come, as there will be while the World endures; and ſo long as there will be luſt and paſſion, vice and wickedneſs more or leſs amongſt men; ſo long alſo they will be very deſirous to believe thoſe Doctrines that promiſe ſecurity, without an effectual reformation: And in the company of more miſtakes tending to the ſame comfort, it will be a very hard matter indeed to convince a man of that miſtake, that his *form of godlineſs* will ſupply the want of the real *power of it*: But alas! where Truth is profeſſed without the mixture of any Doctrinal Errors of this kind, there is ſtill too much room left for this practical Error, of *holding the truth in unrighteouſneſs*: For whilſt ſome men are led into ſin by Error, do not others who are guilty of the ſame ſins, hope that they ſhall be overlooked for the ſake of their oppoſition to thoſe Errors, and the profeſſing and maintaining the contrary Truth? 'Tis true, that our Church, according to the truth of the Scriptures, and the cleareſt reaſon that there is for any thing in the world, holds forth a neceſſity

ceſſity of actual reformation, in order to God's Pardon, and eternal Life; and we diſclaim all manner of ways to ſupply the want of effectual repentance, and a thorough change of heart and life from Sin to God. But, my Brethren, let us lay one Particular ſeriouſly to heart under this General, and that is this, That our very Profeſſion of this Truth, in the natural and proper ſenſe of it, That *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, will not ſerve our turn, without the practice of it; our profeſſion of the neceſſity of an holy life, is not that holy life which is neceſſary: And if the unavoidableneſs of profeſſing ſome Religion, and the deſire we have to keep our Sins too, works this way upon us, as to make us truſt in the purity of our Profeſſion, we are guilty of one Error as pernicious, if we continue in it, as if a thouſand more were added to it. I ſay, if we continue in it; for there is this advantage of a true and pure profeſſion of Chriſtianity, that whoſoever makes it, to uſe the words of our Saviour in a ſenſe ſomething different, he is *not far from the Kingdom of God*; there is leſs to do, to recover him to repentance; no falſe Principle being in the way to hinder it: he lies open to Exhortation, and Perſuaſion, and every ſerious Inſtruction and Admonition ſmites his very Conſcience; he feels the truth that is delivered to him; there is that within him which confeſſeth it all, and will not

eaſily let him be quiet, till it hath made him a new man. But to proceed.

3. In ſome Perſons a diſhonourable opinion of God may be the reaſon of expecting his Rewards, without performing the Duties of Purity and Charity; I fear there are thoſe in the world who think, that God hath appointed the confeſſion of his Name with Prayer, and Thanſgivings, and other holy Offices of Religion, that by theſe things men might give him the ſatisfaction of hearing the greatneſs of his Perfections, and the excellency of his Works applauded by his Creatures; and therefore that theſe things being performed, they have entitled themſelves to his thanks and favour: But this is in truth to have but a very low and mean opinion of the Divine Majeſty, and ſeems to ſuppoſe God to be altogether ſuch an one as our ſelves, who, perhaps, are ſo vain, as to take great delight in our own praiſes, and love to be flattered into a great opinion of our ſelves: If we believe worthily of the Divine Nature, we muſt ſay, That becauſe God is holy and good, therefore he will have men to be ſo; and that he expects to be glorified by us, to be confeſſed and adored; not that he needeth us, or is taken with our commendations of him, but becauſe it is infinitely fit and reaſonable, and equitable, that we ſhould thus worſhip him; and becauſe this is a neceſſary means alſo of forming our minds

minds and actions into the likeneſs of what God is, and of what he does in the World: We are miſtaken, if we think that our Saviour is beholden to us for keeping up the profeſſion of his Name, or that ſome great Intereſt of his is ſerved, when Religion gets ground upon the World, becauſe there will be more and more to ſpeak his Praiſe, and to celebrate his Goodneſs, and his Greatneſs; as if he were like ſome one of thoſe great men, who, if they have Flatterers enough, and can make others ſeem to honour them, though there be no ſuch matter, are very well pleaſed: The Religion of our Saviour was not ſent into the world for the oſtentation of his Power and Greatneſs; and he plainly told us, that he *ſought not his own honour*: It is indeed our indiſpenſible duty to honour him before all the World with all expreſſions of gratitude and humble reverence; and we are moſt inexcuſable and wretched Creatures, if we do it not: But the end of his Religion was to *turn us from our iniquities*, and to *make us a peculiar people, zealous of good works*; and ſo far as this Deſign takes, ſo far he approves of us; otherwiſe he hath plainly told us what we are to expect from him, even that Sentence, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity, I know you not.*

4. The conceit and expectation of ſome unpromiſed mercy of God, muſt neceſſarily

be one ingredient into the presumption o those men, that *hold the truth in unrighteousness* For the Threatnings of God's Word are so undeniably plain, that a man of sense, who believes *the truth, as it is in Jesus*, can have no ease under a guilty Conscience, but upon a supposition, that God will, or may at least, abate something of the rigour of his threatning and accept of less, perhaps, a Death-bed Repentance; of less, I say, than he hath required: This seems to be at the bottom of their Confidence, of whom our Lord foretold, that they should say, *Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name*, &c. that is to say, they had been instrumental to maintain and support his Doctrine in the World, and expostulate now with him, as if they always had some secret hope this would at last be accepted, though there was no promise of it before-hand. But to prevent this presumption, Our Saviour hath said before-hand, *Then will I profeſs to them, I never knew you, Depart from me ye workers of iniquity*; which plain dealing was very necessary: For though it is true, that he that threatens punishment, doth not delight in taking punishment, but intends to prevent the fault; yet when God threatens for this end, and adds moreover Declaration upon the Threatning, That he will not spare, if the fault be not prevented; 'tis an affront to him to presume that he will spare for all that.

To conclude; Let us seriously lay to heart

these

theſe words of our Saviour, which are an anſwer to the moſt concerning Queſtion in the World, who are they that ſhall be ſaved? *Not every one that ſaith, Lord, Lord, but he that doth the will of our father which is in heaven.* He that can ſay, I was by my natural temper and inclination thus and thus, but the Religion of Jeſus, and the Worſhip of God according to the Goſpel, hath given me a new heart, and a new nature; and though I was addicted to ſenſuality and uncleanneſs, and to the Vices of my natural Conſtitution, yet by the Grace of God, and power of Faith, I am what I am, quite another man than I was by my corrupted Nature. So much as there is of this in the World, ſo much true Religion there is in it, and no more, and ſo many as there are, who can thus approve themſelves to God, ſo many ſhall be ſaved, and no more: All other Reliefs will fail, all other Foundations will ruin a man in the time of his diſtreſs, they will deceive him at the hour of death, or at the day of Judgement; and therefore that men might not deceive themſelves, our Saviour concludes his Precepts and Cautions in this effectual manner, *Therefore whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him to a wiſe man, that built his houſe upon a rock; And every one that heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them not, ſhall be likened to a fooliſh man, who built his houſe on the ſand, and the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat*

upon that houſe, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. But let not that happen to us, which St. *James* ſaith, *He that is an hearer of the word, and not a doer thereof, is like to a man that beholdeth his natural face in a glaſs, and for the time knoweth himſelf, but then goeth away, and ſtraightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* Which Similitude is not ſo much intended to expoſe the nature of the folly in hearing and believing, and in doing nothing; as to aſſign the reaſon of it, (*i. e*) *If ye would not be hearers only, but doers of the word*, take care that the convictions of Truth, and the impreſſions which it makes upon your minds when you hear it, do not ſlide away, juſt as the Image of a man's Countenance, which the Glaſs hath made in his imagination, vaniſhes away when he turns from the Glaſs, and he does not ſo well know his own, as any other man's face: The Doctrine of our Saviour doth repreſent us to our ſelves, and ſheweth us our own Actions, what they are; and our Conſciences witneſs thereto, while we hear thoſe plain and powerful words of his which are laid up in the *Evangeliſts*. But if we ſtraightway forget what we are, and what we ſhould be, and take no care to make his *word abide in us*, then, as the ſame Apoſtle ſays, we ſhall be *hearers only, but not doers of the word, deceiving our own ſelves.*

The

The Eleventh Sermon.

JOHN VII. 17.

If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.

AMongſt the many Arguments in Scripture perſuading to an upright Intention, and honeſt Converſation, this in the Text is fit to be propounded, and conſidered; as being not only weighty in it ſelf, as all the reſt are, but adapted to allure the curious temper of man, and moſt proper for them who are moſt inquiſitive after knowledge; and likely to be effectual with the moſt prudent, who aim at the beſt knowledge. For,

1. The knowledge ſpoken of in the Text, is that of the Wiſdom of God, or his Revelations to Mankind by Jeſus Chriſt; and it is of infinite importance to us, for it concerns the welfare of our immortal Souls, and this ſhould invite us to endeavour after it through the moſt difficult methods that could be propounded: But,

2. For our great encouragement, the method laid down in the Text is eaſy to apprehend, and obvious to all Capacities; it is eaſy

likewiſe to put in practice; it requires nothing but a willing mind, *If any man will do the will of God*; if he will but walk according to his preſent light, if he intends to learn that he may practice, *he ſhall know.*

3. The Promiſe is univerſal in reſpect of the Object, being made to all, *If any man will do his will*; no man who is capable of being ſincere and honeſt, is excluded, therefore every man is concerned in the Promiſe; the Condition is not only poſſible to all, but being performed, the Promiſe is ſure to all; therefore this method will fail no man. For,

4. The promiſe is made by him, who *is the way, the truth, and the life*; he himſelf, whoſe Doctrine it is that we would learn, and beſt knows that method by which we may learn it, hath given us this aſſurance, That if we make Piety and Virtue our firſt deſign, we ſhall *know.*

5. The Promiſe is univerſal in reſpect of the matter of it, *he ſhall know of the doctrine* (i. e.) of the whole Doctrine, whatſoever is neceſſary or greatly profitable to the end of knowledge: He ſhall not therefore only learn in general, that the Doctrine of Chriſtianity is of God, but the particular Doctrines that are ſo: ſo likewiſe he ſhall know the ſame things better than he did before; this method will confirm us, and give us the beſt aſſurance; it will keep us from wandring, and doubting afterwards; and if we ſhall know the Truth, and

and know the ſame more perfectly, then the motive is proper to be uſed in all Ages of the Church, and we have reaſon to think our ſelves concerned in it.

Laſtly, It is yet a greater encouragement to follow this method, if we conſider that no man can poſſibly miſs of Happineſs in that way, which our *Saviour* here preſcribes for the attainment of the beſt knowledge; what reaſon have I to take that way of arriving to ſound knowledge, which hath not only ſo great a promiſe to ſecure me that I ſhall not miſs of that end, but which undoubtedly, will ſecure a farther end, and one much better, and more deſirable than that, the love of God, and the compleat happineſs of Soul and Body for ever! But now although a man could by other methods arrive to knowledge, yet if in the mean time he neglected to do the Will of God, he doth not at all provide for his Happineſs; for thohe had as clear an apprehenſion as an Angel, though he received Revelations from the mouth of our Lord himſelf, or by the Inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt: though he had an Infallible Guide to determine all Controverſies for him, and to clear up the darkneſs of every doubt; yet if all this, while he hath a perverſe and vicious Will, and is carried aſide by wandring and unruly Affections, and leads a wicked life, he is certainly in a way of error as dammable as Hereſy; but he that arrives at knowledge this way, doth thereby alſo

alſo ſecure his Salvation, and Eternal Happineſs; which certainly is a moſt powerful recommendation of our Saviour's way, eſpecially if you add this conſideration, that it hath the advantage of all other methods by which we can hope to gain a right underſtanding in Religion.

I know it will be objected, That Impious and Profane men have apprehenſions as capable of judging what is true, and what is falſe, as Good men, and oftentimes their Abilities are greater, and their Parts quicker, than thoſe of the ſincere and godly; and moreover, that ſome wicked men have arrived to greater knowledge in Religion, than thouſands of Religious perſons ever had.

To this Objection I anſwer,

1. That ſuppoſing an equality of other means and abilities, he that is ſincere towards God, hath many advantages above a wicked man in order to the gaining of that knowledge, to which the wicked may poſſibly arrive.

2. That there is ſome knowledge in Religion proper to the godly, which the other continuing as he is, can never gain: Now if that which is poſſibly to both, may be more eaſily and certainly attained by the good man, ſuppoſed to be equal in other reſpects to the wicked; if there be ſomething alſo that cannot be attained by the wicked, though in other reſpects never ſo ſuperior to the good man, then is not the Rule of our Saviour

diſparaged

diſparaged by the pretence now mentioned, but we have ſtill as great reaſon to take his method, as there ſeemed to be at firſt.

Now there are theſe two things, which I hope to make out by the following Diſcourſe.

Firſt of all, That ſuppoſing the good and the bad to be equally endued with natural Abilities of underſtanding, and equally to enjoy the external means of knowledge, the former hath great Advantages above the latter, for the gaining of that knowledge in Religion which is poſſible to both; this will appear from theſe two general Arguments.

1. That ſincerity of heart, with a religious life, is in it ſelf a fit means to attain knowledge; and that the contrary diſpoſition and courſe of life, renders a man very unfit to diſcern divine Truth.

2. That there are many great promiſes of knowledge and wiſdom made to godly men, and to none elſe; but that, of his Juſtice, he hath threatned, and by the ſame Juſtice doth often infatuate the underſtandings of the wicked.

1. That a ſincere intent towards God, and doing his Will, is a fit means of it ſelf to attain knowledge. For in the

1*ſt* place, It takes in all that is good and profitable in any other way of coming to the knowledge of the Truth: For is *ſearching the Scripture* a good means? doing the will of God includes that, for it is his will that we

ſhould

ſhould ſearch the Scriptures. Is hearkning to our Sipritual Guides another way? It is the will of God that we ſhould *know them that labour amongſt us, and are over us in the Lord, and admoniſh us.* Is an impartial examination of thoſe grounds upon which the ſeveral Parties in *Chriſtendom* pretend to hold the truth? It is the will of God, that we ſhould *prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good*; that we ſhould not *believe every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of God.* Is it the uſe of our own reaſon, and arguing from Principles of natural Religion? This is plainly ſuppoſed in the command of trying their Doctrines, who pretend to inſtruct us in Revelation. Is it of any uſe to enquire into the ſenſe of Ancient Churches, if we are able to do it? this is not hindred, but furthered by doing the will of God, which always ſuppoſeth a ſincere deſire to know the truth; for this ſincerity gives a proſperous influence to the labours of the diligent and learned; whereas, if the intereſt of ambition, or covetouſneſs, does mix it ſelf with the ſtudies of men, and infect them with a ſecret diſloyalty to the truth; it doth moſt commonly blaſt their endeavours, through the corruptneſs of their end, making them bend their wit not ſo much to know the truth, as to ſerve their Cauſe. This is the firſt conſideration, That whatever is good and profitable in any other way, is included in this.

2. The

2. The obedient and honeſt mind is peculiarly fitted for the evidence of Divine Truth, which is enough to ſatisfy the prudent and conſiderate, and thoſe that are willing to learn, but not to bear down the prejudices and paſſions of the untractable. To this purpoſe we may conſider, That our Saviour accommodated his Inſtructions to the tempers of the humble and willing: But when he met with the captious *Phariſees*, he returned them Anſwers like their Queſtions; deſigning rather to ſilence their Arrogance, than to inform them, and convince them of the truth; for he perceived all that labour was loſt upon men of their perverſe minds, which was abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfie thoſe there that were wiſe and modeſt, and diſintereſted. Thus after they had been cavilling at his Doctrine, he asks them, *whoſe ſon Chriſt was to be?* they ſaid *David*'s; if *David then*, ſays he, *call him Lord, how is he his ſon?* where he left them ſpeechleſs, without explaining the difficulty; for he knew Reaſon would not ſerve them: So when they asked him, By what Authority he did thoſe things which he did, and this after they they had known his wonderful Works, he did not vouchſafe to give them a direct Anſwer, but replies to their Queſtion with another; *The baptiſm of John, was it from heaven, or of men*? He knew they would ſay, They could not tell; *Neither tell I you*, ſays he, *by what authority I do theſe things*. How evident and reaſonable

ſonable ſoever the inſtitution of the Goſpel is, it was not delivered in ſuch a way as ſhould certainly prevail againſt the obſtinacy of the wicked, and enlighten the minds of them that *love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil*, but in ſuch a way as would ſatisfy all that love the truth, and are reſolved to follow it: Hereby God hath made great diſtinction between the humble and honeſt on the one ſide, and the proud and inſincere on the other, while the beſt knowledge is eaſy and ready to the former, but in compariſon hard to the latter.

3. Due reverence, and love of God's Word, is it ſelf apt to promote the underſtanding of it, which is a great advantage which the good man hath above all others: what a man admires and delights in, engages his whole Soul, and makes it all attention; and in that poſture the mind apprehends more readily and clearly. On the other ſide, no man makes a good proficiency in that which he ſtudies with an alienated mind; and indeed it is impoſſible he ſhould, ſince he doth not put his ſtrength to the work, and his Soul is hardly preſent with the buſineſs he is about: What other reaſon can we give, why men that are accurate at one ſort of buſineſs, are heavy and inapprehenſive at others? for the Soul in it ſelf hath a capacity equally open to the embracing of all Reaſon, that therefore which makes the difference, muſt be their value of,

and

and delight in one ſubject, and their averſion from the other: It is no wonder then, if *David*, as he ſpeaks of himſelf, was *wiſer than all his enemies, and underſtood more than the ancients, and had more underſtanding than his teachers* themſelves; *For*, ſaith he, *I have kept thy precepts, I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day long, and the commandments of God are ever with me.* We ſee by experience, that men arrive to great skill in the buſineſs which they have in liking and eſteem, becauſe they frequently exerciſe themſelves in it, and daily employ their thoughts about it. Now that veneration of Divine Truth, that value of Chriſtian Knowledge, which is implied in a ſincere intent to do the will of God, is incomparably greater, and more operative and effectual, than that which is founded either upon deſire of praiſe, or preferment, or the mere pleaſure of ſpeculation only; Therefore that eſteem which the good man hath for Divine Truth, will enforce a more frequent and attentive meditation thereupon; and that aſſiduity will procure a better underſtanding of it; and this again more delight and pleaſure in it; and if ſuch proficiency and ſuch ſatisfaction do thus whet one another, and if they are not cauſed but by a great value and eſteem of Divine truth, then the good man who values it moſt, has a ſingular advantage in his ſtudy and ſearch after it.

4. Every prevailing Luſt and Paſſion is in

it ſelf an impediment to the knowledge of the Truth: For inſtance, the affectation of the praiſe of men is that which frequently perverts a right judgment of things; it was our Saviour's own Expoſtulation with the *Jews*, *How can ye believe, that receive honour one of another*, and ſeek not that honour which cometh of God? *John* 5. 44. One would wonder what a ſtrange deluſion the Pride of the *Phariſees* kept them under; the Deluſion was ſo great, that they could not judge whether they believed or disbelieved what they read in *Moſes*; for our Saviour tells them, *v.* 46. *Had ye believed Moſes, ye would alſo have believed me, for he wrote of me.* Could we, or could they themſelves have thought, that they who truſted in *Moſes*, that they who were the great Teachers of the Law of *Moſes*, that they who rejected *Jeſus*, becauſe they thought his Doctrine overthrew the Law of *Moſes*, ſhould be miſtaken in their own belief of *Moſes*? and yet he adds, *v.* 47. *If ye believe not his writings, how ſhall ye believe my words?* By which we may learn theſe things:

1. If vain glory had not infatuated theſe men, if the conceit of their own wiſdom, had not kept them from doubting of what they once thought, if they had been humble enough to permit the Writings of *Moſes* to convince them, they muſt needs have read there, that *Jeſus was the Chriſt.*

2. If one ſin be predominant in a man's heart,

heart, as *Pride*; he may be ſo deluded by it, as not to believe that to be in the Scripture which is plainly there, and this too in a matter of great importance and concernment, as the caſe now mentioned plainly ſhews.

3. Much more will the judgments of men be perverted by ſeveral Luſts and Vices in conjunction with one another, if to Pride and Ambition, Covetouſneſs and Envy, and Revengefulneſs be added; the fatal influence whereof upon the Underſtanding is ſo plainly diſcernable in the groſs miſtakes of thoſe men that are engaged to ſerve a by-Cauſe, and to maintain a Party againſt all the World: Did we not know it by experience, we ſhould think it incredible, that in theſe circumſtances, men of learning and ſubtilty ſhould not be able to judge of the ſtrength or weakneſs of Arguments, of the true or falſe interpretation of Scripture, of the pertinent or impertinent application of it, even where the caſe is ſo plain, that it requires neither ſubtilty nor learning to make a judgment of it. Could any diſintereſted man believe, that from the ſaying of Saint *John* in the concluſion of his Revelation, *If any man ſhall add unto the words of the prophecy of this book, God ſhall add unto him the plagues that are written in it*; that from this Saying the unlawfulneſs of all Human Forms and Conſtitutions in Divine Worſhip might be inferr'd? that is to ſay, Becauſe a Curſe is threatned to any that ſhall attempt to

corrupt, the Bible, by making any alteration in the Revelation of St. *John*, therefore nothing is to be done in God's Worship, which is not positively required in the Word of God. And yet by such applications of Scripture as this, the pretence hath been carried on by men of name and authority in the World. Would it ever have come into a mans head to suspect, that the Power of the *Roman* Bishop to depose Kings and Emperors, might be argued from those words of our Lord to *Peter*, *Feed my sheep*? If Ambition and Covetousness, and the serving of a Cause, had not interven'd, he would think the Sheep of Christ were to be fed with wholsome Doctrine, and to be instructed in the duties of Patience and Constancy under Persecution, and not with those inhuman Principles, which turn them into Wolves; and it is plain enough, that without any wit, and with infinitely greater probability, the quite contrary conclusion may be several ways inferred from these words; the quite contrary, I say, to what they of the Church of *Rome* would infer from them. I shall not stand to expose their arguing from those words, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church*, in behalf of the universal Supremacy of the *Roman* Bishops, and that because of the allusion of *Petrus* to *Petra*, which if it would hold good for St. *Peter*'s being the Rock, how it will serve to make *Boniface* or *Clement* the Rock too, would be

hard to ſay; or if it did, that *Rock* implies Univerſal Supremacy, would not ſuddenly have been thought of, if it had not been to ſerve a Cauſe; there would be a little more colour in thoſe words, *and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*; were it not plain, That when the Keys were given to him, as they were not till after the Reſurrection of Chriſt, they were given to all the other Apoſtles, as fully and effectually as to him: But ſuppoſe that had been ſaid of *Peter*, which St. *Paul* ſaid of himſelf, that the *care of all the Churches* was upon him, which is a Saying more likely to conclude an Univerſal Paſtorſhip from, than the other, how many learned Treatiſes may we think had been written upon it before now? But for all that, if any man ſhould in earneſt offer that place to prove that St. *Paul* was Chriſt's Vicar-General on Earth, he would be anſwered no other way than by contempt: So foully are the underſtandings of men overruled by their affections, after they have wedded a Cauſe, and reſolved to go through with it, and to maintain it right or wrong; but that which is ſtill worſe is this, that where the Spirit of Faction prevails, and worldly Intereſt is carried on under the pretext of Religion, the underſtandings of men are frequently diſabled from judging right between good and evil; otherwiſe how were it poſſible for men to believe that Hypocriſy and Lying, and Perjury, and Murder, and

Treason, are in some cases not only excuseable but laudable? that they should commit such Crimes as these, not only without regret and horrour, but with a chearful Conscience, and the expectation of heaven in reward of their actions? Wherefore, that I might not lose the use of my understanding in most plain and evident matters, that I might not be weaker than a Child, or an Idiot, I would never engage my self with the Contentious and Factious; I would not dare to trust my self with a Party, and would not serve a Cause, but acknowledge a mistake, though it were my Friend, and follow truth where-ever it led me: For nothing is more evident in the experience of the world than this, That when men are led aside by their worldly Interests, when their Reputations are engaged, and they are made fast to a Party, their understandings are so disabled, that in a short time they confidently put themselves upon defending things most unjustifiable, and believing things that are most incredible and impossible: Let us therefore allow St. *Peter*'s direction, to *lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envyings, and evil speakings*, and that for the reason by him given, *viz.* that we may *desire the sincere milk of the Word*; that we may desire and aim at the knowledge of the Truth; for where that Assembly of Sins is got together, or indeed where any one of them is, it is apt to extinguish that very love of Truth, the very desire of knowing it.

To

To proceed; Luxury alſo, and Voluptuouſneſs, and an impure courſe of Life, is a very great impediment to the knowledge of the truth; ſometimes by introducing ſuch Diſeaſes as ſhatter the underſtanding, and dull the apprehenſion; they that always ſwim in ſenſual delights, meet with rough and tempeſtuous Seas ſometimes, that ſhake their Bodies, and at length Reaſon lik a drowning Pilot drops off, and is drowned in pleaſures; it often happens that the Epicure grows crazy before his time, and when his airy Fancy is evaporated by the heats of Youth, and his Wit is grown flat and unweildly, he himſelf becomes contemptible to the younger Debauchees that reign in his ſtead; Temperance and Regular living have a kind influence upon the Intellectual Abilities of men to nouriſh and preſerve them, and lengthen them, and all the while to make them more fit for their proper imployment; but much more are they requiſite to qualify us for a good underſtanding of Divine Truth, becauſe it requires a ſerious conſideration, & diligent attention, which the Epicure is a ſtranger to, becauſe ſhe is ſpiritual, and the mind cannot converſe with her, while it meets with the fumes of ſenſuality; becauſe ſhe is of a purifying nature, and not more an Enemy to uncleanneſs, than the Voluptuary is averſe from her; good reaſon therefore had St. *James* when he ſhewed how we ſhould receive the Word with meekneſs, to exhort us, that we *lay a-*

ſide all filthineſs and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs.

In a word, The bent of the will and affections have ſuch a ſway over the underſtanding, that daily experience ſhews how the ſame things appears differently to men, nay to the ſame men according to the temper they are in; for inſtance, if perſons that have lived long friendly together, chance to fall out, immediately former actions and ſpeeches are remembred and commented upon, and an ill conſtruction put upon them, though till that time they were taken well enough, and yet the things are the ſame, and the underſtandings of men were as able before as now, only there is diſlike now inſtead of the kindneſs that was before; no wonder then if a vicious inclination, and a guilty Conſcience to obſtruct the entrance of truth and ſound knowledge into the mind, ſince they muſt needs create an averſation to it; diſcourſe to a greedy worlding, of Immortality, and *laying up treaſure in heaven*, and he can hardly underſtand what you ſay, 'tis as inſipid talk to him, as a Lecture of Philoſophy to a Child, that underſtands nothing but play; but fall upon ſome diſcourſe that tends to getting, drop but the hint of a good Bargain, he greedily embraces every word, and is as apprehenſive as heart can wiſh; and guilty men are apt to fortify themſelves againſt all that can be ſaid to diſſwade them from their beloved ſins; and that is reaſon enough, why ſin doth more or leſs bar up the underſtanding againſt

Divine

Divine Truth; *Men love darkeneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.*

Now the concluſion from all this is evident, on the one ſide, one habitual worldly Luſt is enough to hinder the true apprehenſive of heavenly things; and then how can they who *drink iniquity like water*, who labour to *quench the Spirit*, be fit to receive Divine Truths, and to underſtand *the things of the Spirit of God*? On the other ſide, a ſincere intention towards God, removes all thoſe impediments which obſtruct the force of truth, and moreover gives ſeveral advantages of its own towards the attainment of ſound knowledge; therefore it is in it ſelf a fit means for that end; *A ſcorner ſeeketh wiſdom, and findeth it not; but knowledge is eaſy to him that underſtandeth.*

2. There are many great Promiſes of Knowledge both in the Old and New Teſtament peculiar to good men, but God hath in Juſtice threatned, and by the ſame Juſtice he doth often infatuate the underſtandings of the wicked. Now if goodneſs doth of it ſelf lead to knowledge; if there be a ſupernatural bleſſing that goes along with the ſincere man to proſper his endeavours after knowledge; what greater advantages can we deſire in order to this end, than thoſe which ſincerity towards God intitles us too? Thus the very Text hath the force of a Promiſe; *If any man will do his will, he ſhall know*; we have our Saviour's word for it, and to be ſure he will make it good; and it appears by

other places, that ſomething more is here meant, than that knowledge is naturally promoted by goodneſs; in *Pſal.* 25. 9. it is ſaid, *The meek he will guide in judgment*; and immediately again, *The meek he will teach his way*: Now certainly here is ſomething promiſed to the meek that is not common to others; and the *guidance* and *teaching* which is promiſed, denotes clearly a bleſſing on their underſtandings. But now if this be promiſed to meekneſs, we cannot doubt but God will more plentifully fulfil his Promiſe to thoſe who add to meekneſs, purity and temperance; and to that, an univerſal love and fear of God, and charity towards man, eſpecially conſidering that this Promiſe is repeated again to ſuch Perſons, *ver.* 14. *The ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will ſhew them his Covenant*; where God's *Covenant* explains what is meant by his *ſecret*, and by his *way*, *ver.* 9. That *way of God* in *ver.* 10. is ſaid to be *mercy and truth*; the Covenant of Mercy revealed by Chriſt, which was a ſecret in former Ages; ſo that the good man, he that ſincerely loves truth, and intends obedience, is here promis'd a ſignal *bleſſing* on his endeavors to know the Covenant of God revealed in the Goſpel, whether enjoining the Duty he expects from us, or promiſing thoſe benefits and rewards in this or the other life which we may expect from him; this very Promiſe we have again repeated, *Prov.* 3. 32. *His ſecret is with the righteous*; it had been enough if God had

had passed his but once, but since he hath so often repeated it, we cannot doubt but that good men shall be blessed with a better apprehension of the things of the Gospel than others. In *John* 8. the like Promises are made, and the like Conditions upon which they are made, are annexed, *ver.* 12. *He that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*, shall know all things requisite to Life Eternal, *ver.* 32. *Ye shall know the truth*; but 'tis upon this condition, *ver.* 33. that *ye continue in my word*, and *John* 14. 21. *I will love and manifest my self* to every one that loveth me, and keepeth my Commandments. Upon the account of these and the like Promises, as well as upon other grounds, we may say with the Psalmist, *Psal.* 111. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*; it is the best, most auspicious entrance upon it; and *they that do thereafter, have a good understanding*, having good security that they cannot fail of it.

To conclude this particular: From all these Promises we may be most assured, that every man following the rule of Christ, shall not fail of so much knowledge as will secure his Eternal Life, and even that is a mighty encouragement, to observe this Rule. If any of us were sure that some Angel attended us constantly, observing all our actions, insinuating good counsels, and exciting good thoughts, when our Passions grow wild, and we are on the brink of sin; it would infuse a great regard of all

all we did into us, and we ſhould reckon our ſelves happy men: Certainly it is more happy to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God; what can be more deſirable than to have him who is Wiſdom it ſelf opening our ears, and ſealing Inſtruction to us; bleſſing our ſearches into holy things, and accompanying our meditations with a ready and proſperous apprehenſion? And this is that we are ſure of, whilſt we are in the way of doing God's will, becauſe we are ſure he is not *ſlack in his Promiſes*: But this advantage will appear ſo much the greater, if we conſider that God doth ſometimes deliver up wicked men to darkneſs of underſtanding, and hath threatned that he will do ſo. That he has done ſo, St. *Paul* ſhews plainly, *Rom.* 1 by the example of the *Gentiles*, becauſe they detained *the truth in unrighteouſneſs*, *ver.* 19. and did *not glorify God* with that knowledge which he had given them, they firſt *became vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh heart was darkned*, *ver.* 21. So they fell to Idolatry, *ver.* 22. and then we find that *he gave them up to vile affections*, and a *reprobate* (*i. e.*) an undiſcerning *mind*, which knew no difference between good and evil; and that God will deal ſo with us if we deny him by our works, 'tis but reaſonable to expect, tho' he had not ſaid it; but he hath given us ſufficient warning in the threatning to the Church of *Epheſus*, Rev. 2. *Repent and do thy firſt works, or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candleſtick*

out

out of its place; their Candleſtick is removed, and now they are in *Turkiſh* darkneſs, and ſo the *burden* of *Epheſus* is fulfilled. But why, I beſeech you, ſhould that admonition be ſo often repeated in the ſecond and third Chapters, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith to the ſeven Churches*; but to let us know, that the threatnings there denounced, belong to the Churches of *Europe*, as well as of *Aſia*; and to *England*, as well as to *Epheſus*: And ſeeing every one has ears to hear, and therefore ought to hear, therefore every particular man is as liable to the ſame ſeverity as whole Churches; and therefore as by the ſins of a Nation, God may be provoked to deliver it up to darkneſs and deluſion, and to believe lies; ſo for the ſins of particular perſons, he may give them over to a Lying ſpirit, and ſuffer Seducers to prevail upon them, ſo that they ſhall not ſee the plaineſt truths in Religion, nor diſcern the moſt groſs and monſtrous Errors; *Becauſe they received not the love of the truth that they might be ſaved; for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſions, that they ſhould believe a lie, that they might all be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs*, 2 *Theſ.* 2. 11. It is not therefore unreaſonable to conclude, that the contempt of all holy things that reigns amongſt many wicked men, is from the Judgment of God, giving them up to a reprobate mind; their habitual Vices have violated their natural Inſtincts,

Inſtincts, and raiſed out the ſenſe of good and evil; and moreover the vengeance of God's wrath is upon them, giving them over to their own vileneſs, permitting them to run on in wickedneſs without the checks and reſtraints of his good Spirit, and to defy the goodneſs of God, and to laugh at Counſels and Admonitions, and to make haſte to their own perdition, thereby fulfilling that Prophecy of *Daniel* referring to the Times of the Goſpel, *The wicked ſhall do wickedly, and none of the wicked ſhall underſtand*, Dan. 12. 10.

Of what hath been ſaid, the ſum is this, If godlineſs be in it ſelf a fit means to promote the knowledge of truth; if it hath moreover a *ſure word of promiſe*, which the unrighteous have not, That the righteous ſhall be aſſiſted in the ſearch of truth, and if on the other hand, ungodly men are under ſo many natural impediments that obſtruct the knowledge of the truth, and moreover lye under ſuch ſevere threatnings of blindneſs, it muſt needs follow, that ſuppoſing the Good and the Bad to be equally endued with natural Abilities of underſtanding, and equally enjoying the external means of knowledge, that the former has vaſt advantages yet above the latter, which was the firſt thing to be ſhown. The

Second is, That there is ſome knowledge of Divine things, that cannot be attained by the

the wicked man while he ſo continues, though in other reſpects he be never ſo much ſuperior to the righteous, and that is, the experimental knowledge of Religion, which does above all other things confirm the Faith of a good Chriſtian; he that doth the will of God, underſtands the power of good Principles to fortify him againſt temptations, to reſtrain him from ſin, to keep him to his Duty, to render it pleaſant and delightful to him, to moderate him in his proſperity, and to ſupport him in adverſity, and by all this he underſtands the great worth and excellency of true Religion incomparably better than any man, who can talk learnedly, and argue dexterouſly about it, but never felt the life and power of it in his heart; for this reaſon it is that the Faith of good Chriſtians, who are not ſo well verſt in ſubtle reaſonings as in religious practice, cannot be ſhaken by the objections of a Sophiſter, becauſe they have that inward ſenſe of the power and excellency of Divine Truths, which is above all other argument: They know by experience, that *in the keeping of God's Commandments there is great reward*, and cannot therefore be entangled by any artificial objections againſt it; but that I may not be miſtaken, I do not pretend, that the pleaſure which a man finds in believing any Doctrine, is always an argument that the Doctrine is true: There are ſome Doctrines in the World that tend

to

to licentiouſneſs, that weaken the obligations to an holy life, and therefore are ſweet to the carnal man, becauſe they can put him in poſſeſſion of great joy in himſelf, before he has that good title to it, which can only be founded upon repentance and holineſs; therefore it is neither falſe nor allowable always to argue from the experience a man hath of the ſweetneſs and pleaſure of his perſwaſions to the truth of them, as many miſguided Souls have done; but for all that, it is moſt certain, that Religion conſiſting in the belief of truth, and the practice of goodneſs, a man ſhall underſtand the power of the one, and the excellency of the other by experience, better than he can by meer ſpeculation; for the nature of things that are to be done, is never ſo fully underſtood as by doing them; and the force of Truth is never ſo thoroughly felt as when it makes the Will and Affections, as well as the Underſtanding, ſubmit to it; now the beſt way to avoid arguing to our ſelves fallaciouſly from our own experience, and being impoſed upon by the joy and pleaſure which thoſe perſwaſions yield, that tend to carnal ſecurity; the beſt way (I ſay) to avoid this, is to follow our Saviour's rule, by laying the foundation even of experimental knowledge in doing the will of God, and applying our ſelves with all ſincerity to the keeping of his Commandments, becauſe then we ſhall never

ver argue from experience, but in favour of the truth, (*i. e.*) of true Virtue and Holiness, and of those Principles which lead to the practice of it: And most certainly, there is that comfort and satisfaction in believing Divine Truth, there are those Joys in living according to it, which can never be thoroughly understood, but by the practice of Religion and Virtue, which no man can have a just conception of, till he hath *tasted and seen how gracious God is. Solomon* says, That the *ways of* wisdom are *pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*; but then we shall never thoroughly understand this, till we walk in them: *in the keeping of God's Commandments there is great reward*; but how shall we find this reward, but in keeping of them? It may be described to us by others but as imperfectly as the Pencil doth Life and Motion, the best descriptions will fall short of the subject; and if we be *alienated from the life of God*, we cannot fully conceive it: Nay, most commonly the delights of the righteous are things flat and insipid, and the representation of them is nauseous and irksom to the carnal worldling, and he is hardly in a better condition to understand it, than one that is born Blind can apprehend that saying of *Solomon, Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the Sun.*

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The ſum of all is this, That if ſincerity towards God in doing his will, is a great advantage towards the obtaining of that knowledge which is poſſible to the wicked man, the knowledge of ſpeculation, if alſo that knowledge is gained by it, which the inſincere have nothing at all of; if the righteous do not only better apprehend the weight of arguments, but underſtand more, by having *their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern between good and evil*; then have we great reaſon to follow our Saviour's method, *If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.*

Only let us remember, that this knowledge is not to be gained, this bleſſing is not to be procured to our ſelves, either by my diſcourſe, or by your hearing, what hath been ſaid concerning our Saviour's words, no nor by granting the truth and reaſonableneſs of what hath been offered in illuſtration of them; but only by putting our ſelves ſeriouſly upon the trial of this way, by doing the will of God; for what hath been ſaid of Divine Truths in the general, holds good of this in particular, That the excellency of our Lord's method for the gaining of good knowledge in the things of God, cannot be thoroughly judged, till we have applied our ſelves to the uſe of it; and I doubt not, but thoſe that have made trial, do acknowledge the truth of what hath been ſaid.

FINIS.